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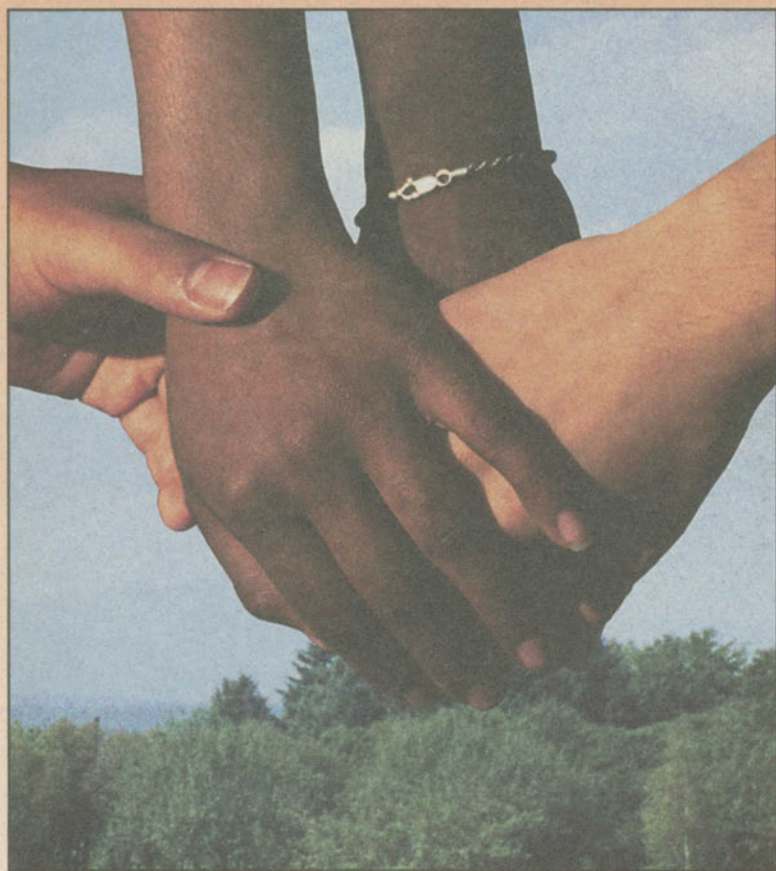
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# THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

October 2000  
Vol. 54 No.2



University of Illinois  
Graduate School of Library and Information Science

University of Illinois Press

# Wemberly Worried



by KEVIN HENKES

★ "Wemberly, a quiet and introverted mouse, spends all of her time worrying about big things (will her parents disappear in the middle of the night?), little things (spilling juice at the table), and things in between (will she shrink in the bath?). As if she doesn't have enough to stew about, the anticipated beginning of nursery school opens a whole new world of woe. Happily, the first-day jitters are soon diminished with the help of an understanding teacher and a new friend. Henkes once again puts his finger on the pulse of young children, combining good storytelling, careful characterization, and wonderfully expressive artwork to create an entertaining and reassuring picture book."

—Starred review / *School Library Journal*

★ "This young heroine speaks to the worrywart in everyone."

—Starred review / *Publishers Weekly*



"In many ways, Wemberly is the flip side of Henkes' sassy Lilly. As much as little ones love Lilly, the 'fraidy cats of the world will see themselves in this winsome worrywart."

—ALA Booklist

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# T H E B U L L E T I N

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OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

October 2000  
Vol. 54 No. 2



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## A LOOK INSIDE

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49 THE BIG PICTURE

*McKendree* by Sandra Belton

50 NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Reviewed titles include:

55 • *Dream Snow* written and illus. by Eric Carle

66 • *Blue Avenger Cracks the Code* by Norma Howe

68 • *Silent to the Bone* by E. L. Konigsburg

79 • *The Beet Fields: Memories of a Sixteenth Summer* by Gary Paulsen

79 • *It's Raining Pigs & Noodles* by Jack Prelutsky; illus. by James Stevenson

81 • *Madlenka* written and illus. by Peter Sís

89 PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS

90 SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

---

#### EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH REVIEWS

*	Asterisks denote books of special distinction.
R	Recommended.
Ad	Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.
M	Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.
NR	Not recommended.
SpC	Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.
SpR	A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.

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Editorial Correspondence. Review copies and all correspondence about reviews should be sent to Janice Del Negro, *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, 51 E. Armory Ave., Champaign, IL 61820-6601. E-mail: [bccb@alexia.lis.uiuc.edu](mailto:bccb@alexia.lis.uiuc.edu)

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## THE BIG PICTURE

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### *McKendree*

by Sandra Belton

Sandra Belton is a writer of, among other things, historical novels set in mid-twentieth century America. Her Ernestine and Amanda series (four books to date) focuses on two girls growing up in a solidly middle-class African-American community in the 1950s. Belton's light and loving touch in depicting the titular characters' often adversarial relationship provides the emotional core of her books. That light and loving touch is in strong evidence in her latest work.

This understated novel opens with fourteen-year-old Tilara Haynes taking the train to see her aunt Cloelle in West Virginia. It is the summer of 1948, and Tilara is looking forward to the coming weeks, free from the supervision of her stern, loving minister father. Mr. Morris, the train porter, serves the girl her breakfast in her roomette, saying, "My special service for every pretty young lady." When Tilara looks at her reflection in the train window, she can almost believe him: "Soon the picture-in-picture reflections of the window made it easier to imagine that she was what Mr. Morris had said: a pretty young lady. But in her heart she knew better."

The conflict in Belton's novel centers around something known but not often discussed: that color conflicts are not just interracial, but intraracial. Dark-skinned and dark-eyed like her father and his sister, her aunt Cloelle, Tilara suffers from comparisons to her idolized, light-skinned mother. An only child, the protagonist grew up in a house that is nearly a shrine to her late mother. Belinda Cross Haynes had "skin the color of cream, hair that hung to her waist in silky brown curls, and wide eyes the color of gray smoke." Her daughter has grown up listening to her father "say again and again: 'Lindy was what you call a beautiful woman. A *truly* beautiful woman.' Her father's words and the everywhere pictures told Tilara that she could never be pretty."

The novel unfolds slowly, like a hot summer afternoon. Tilara spends part of her summer days at McKendree, an old-age home for elderly blacks, where she joins a small group of local teen volunteers. The dynamic among the teenagers is tense with the additional complications of romantic almost-triangles and hidden agendas; the dynamic between the teenagers and the elderly residents is a mutually amicable one, the teenagers listening while the old folks tell stories from their lives.

Belton's omniscient narration shows who's what as well as who's who as March, the popular, light-skinned leader of the volunteers, makes a calculated play for Tilara, while Braxton, Tilara's secret crush, has an unexpressed yen for the light-skinned Georgia. The main body of text is interspersed with italicized sections describing the inner thoughts and feelings of key characters, a device that allows the reader to know that March thinks Tilara beautiful even as he methodi-

cally plots his ultimately unsuccessful conquest of her; and that Tilara, mistrusting March because of his light skin (and her own good sense), admires dark-skinned Braxton. Elderly Miss Alpha, former dancer at the Cotton Club, is unaware of her own prejudice when she favors the light-skinned Georgia over the darker girls. Mr. Reese, Miss Alpha's longtime beau, accepts the notion that light-skinned is better as well: "I wanted that same kind of girl for myself. The same kind of girl the white boys had. The kind of girl white boys been sayin' is the most beautiful in the world. They was even sayin' that to us by the kind of gals they picked to be in the house with them down on the plantation!" The juxtaposition of the elderly residents and young volunteers permits unselfconscious commentary on the value of light skin over dark, "good" hair over kinky, as the disparate generations find the places they overlap as well as the places they divide.

Belton's characters stand at different stages in their life journeys. The elders, their values fixed, look back; the teenagers, their values forming, look forward. The middle-aged caretakers of both old and young are aware of the values of the past even as they try to influence the values of the future. The heroine's summer journey has clarified her own values, changing her from a shy girl struggling with personal doubt into an increasingly confident young woman sure of her own worth. The memorable closing image is Tilara triumphant, "a vision in red," waiting with her father and aunt for the train that will take her home: "It was clear they were members of one family—one man, one woman, one girl in red. Their words and laughter floated around them. The girl tossed her head back as she laughed. It was music." (Imprint information appears on p. 53.)

Janice M. Del Negro, Editor



## NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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ALPHIN, ELAINE MARIE *Counterfeit Son*. Harcourt, 2000 [192p]  
ISBN 0-15-202645-2 \$17.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 9 up

Cameron Miller's life up to the start of the narrative has been a horror story: his father, Hank Miller, is a serial killer and sexual predator who kidnaps, abuses, and kills young boys. Fourteen when Hank is arrested, Cameron decides to tell the police that he is not Hank's child, but instead the Lacey family's long-lost son, Neil, who went missing six years ago when he was eight. The premise is riveting, and Alphin's writing sustains breathtaking suspense about the discovery of Cameron's deception. Infant toe prints are unavailable and dental records are inconclusive, but meanwhile the Lacey parents have swept Cameron into their family, wholeheartedly believing him to be their Neil returned. Alphin subtly shifts Cameron's language, so that he begins to call the Lacey parents Mom and Dad, but his acceptance into the family does not end his troubles. One investigator remains unconvinced that he is Neil Lacey, and one of Hank's old friends shows up and pressures Cameron to steal things from the Laceys in exchange for his silence about his true identity. The final plot twist is so wrenching that it almost breaks credibility: Cameron actually *is* Neil, suffering profound amnesia



from years of sexual and emotional torment inflicted by Hank. Hank killed his own son, kidnapping Neil as a replacement so that authorities would not investigate the boy's absence, and this is confirmed when the body of the real Cameron Miller is found buried under the floor of Hank Miller's basement. Although this is not a narrative for the thin-skinned, young adults who have been captivated by stories of serial killers will be riveted by this story of a serial killer's counterfeit son. KM

ALVAREZ, JULIA *The Secret Footprints*; illus. by Fabian Negrin. Knopf, 2000 [34p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-679-99309-6 \$18.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-89309-1 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-8 yrs

The ciguapas are the secret people who live beneath the sea, coming on land "to hunt for food only at night because they were so fearful of humans"; since their feet are on backwards, their footprints mislead curious land-dwellers. Young Guapa has none of her people's shyness, however, and her bold exploits on land eventually lead her into fascination with a human family. She makes more contact than she plans, however, when she stumbles into their picnic and can't run away; when the family seeks help for the girl with the poor twisted ankles, her fellow ciguapas spirit her away, but they give the family special status thereafter. The legendary ciguapas (an author's note gives some background on the history of the relevant Dominican folklore) are an alluring body of beings, with their underwater and secretive existence, and the story is the more appealing for being told from their point of view rather than from the humans'. There's an oddity in the plot, however: as far as we know the human family never realizes that Guapa is a ciguapa, so their kindness to her doesn't actually disprove the queen ciguapa's fears about human treatment of legendary creatures, despite the fact that the ciguapas seem to feel it might. Negrin's mixed-media art has a dense texture and a tropical richness reminiscent of Gauguin, especially in the lustrous greens of the vegetation and browns of the people. There's a dreamy detachment to both humans and ciguapas, which adds to the mystical flavor; though the figures are sometimes stiff (and at least one image has some confusing results in its attempt to depict the ciguapas' reversed feet), they people a suitably legendary world. This will be a new legend to many youngsters, and it should make a splash with lovers of mermaids and other exotic sea-peoples. DS

ANDERSON, LAURIE HALSE *Fever 1793*. Simon, 2000 252p

ISBN 0-689-83858-1 \$16.00

R Gr. 5-8

As yellow fever invades the young nation's capital at Philadelphia, Mattie Cook and her family soon discover that their coffeehouse's distance from the city dock is no protection from the disease. Widow Cook is stricken, and although Mattie and her grandfather try their best to nurse her, they realize it is best to leave her to the dubious care of the doctor and make their way to the healthful countryside. They never reach safety, though; Mattie falls to the fever along the way, and after the girl recovers in a makeshift hospital (well-administered by French doctors who understand the disease better than the famed Dr. Rush and his colleagues), they return home to find the premises deserted and the city in chaos. Determined not only to survive but also to rebuild the family business, Mattie faces food shortages, looters,

the death of her beloved grandfather, and anxiety over her mother's fate. Readers may detect a trace of glibness, resonant of an era closer to their own, in narrator Mattie's voice, but they will likely forgive and forget this small gaffe as they follow the teenager's travails in a devastated city. Those who have worked their way through Ann Rinaldi's offerings will welcome Anderson's take on a gripping episode of American history. EB

ANTLE, NANCY *Sam's Wild West Christmas*; illus. by S. D. Schindler. Dial, 2000 40p (Easy-to-Read)  
ISBN 0-8037-2199-4 \$13.99 R Gr. 1-3

Sam (of *Sam's Wild West Show*, BCCB 4/95) and his Wild West Show have returned, and they've happened on a heap of holiday trouble: some rascally varmints have robbed a train and taken everybody's Christmas presents. Sam and Rodeo Rosie track the villains to their hideout and discover they've also got Santa tied up inside. Some fruitcake-bowling and Christmas-ribbon lassoing apprehend the outlaws, and presents, holiday spirits, and Santa's deliveries ("Sam and Rosie flew off in the hot-air balloon to help a man in a red suit who had gotten a little behind in his work") are restored. This is a lollapalooza of a beginning reader—Antle's incorporation of seasonal phrases ("That sound is sadder than a partridge without a pear tree") allows for amusing riffs while also providing helpful reading clues for some of the more difficult vocabulary. The lighthearted outlaw-pursuit provides some satisfactory adventure without ever really endangering Christmas or St. Nick. Schindler's line-and-watercolor art relies on pale wintry lavender accented with ochre (there's a lot of buckskin about), with some loud color touches for the touring troupe. The protagonists are cheerful and robust, and the robbers—even better, the robbers' horses—are entertainingly caricatured, with grungy looks and dental problems across the board. Christmas rarely gets its fair share of rootin' and tootin', and Antle does a lively job of redressing the deficit. DS

ARMSTRONG, JENNIFER *Spirit of Endurance*; illus. by William Maughan and with photographs. Crown, 2000 [32p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-517-80092-6 \$18.99  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-517-80091-8 \$16.95  
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-6

Once a rare topic in children's literature, the adventures of Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition are now a popular subject, and the Antarctic seas are becoming well-sailed. Armstrong, author of *Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World* (BCCB 2/99), returns to the theme in a different format; a condensed account of the adventure appears in a vertical column occupying half of a page, with the remainder of the spread devoted to visuals. The chronicle capably covers all the major points—the freezing of the *Endurance* into the Antarctic ice, the long wait until the launching of the open boats, the treacherous journey first to Elephant Island and then, for the single boat, on to South Georgia. The narrative suffers somewhat from compression, however, appearing rushed and superficial as a result. The illustrations mix period photographs with panoramic oils, the generous trim size allowing them a dramatic sweep. The paintings are particularly evocative of the grandeur and implacability of the landscape; the humans are less impressive and the scenes are rather emotionally distant, but it's still an intriguing look into aspects of the journey that weren't photographed. Overall, this isn't as effective as Kostyal's *Trial by Ice* (BCCB

12/99), a similar approach for the same reading level, but it's got enough artistic appeal (and readaloud potential) that many libraries will still want to add it to their expanding polar collections. A resource guide and index are included. DS

AV1 *The Christmas Rat*. Atheneum, 2000 [144p]

ISBN 0-689-83842-5 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

Eric has to hang out in his family's Manhattan apartment during Christmas vacation, and with his parents working long hours during the Christmas rush, his best friends unavailable, and a cold snap that makes the Arctic Circle look balmy, he is fretting for something to do. When uncanny exterminator Anjela Gabrail asks him to help kill a rat discovered in the basement, Eric acquiesces out of desperation born of boredom but soon finds himself horrified by the exterminator's blood-thirsty attitude. For reasons even he can't articulate, Eric determines to save the rat and subsequently finds himself being hunted in its place. As a weird holiday mystery, this title is partially successful: the sense of creepy menace from Anjela Gabrail is palpable and pervasive, and Eric faces some scary moments down in the dark basement. As a Christmas fantasy, the novel dilutes its punch with obvious metaphors and pedestrian narration, and Eric's appreciation of the glory of the season has a shallow, tacked-on feeling. Either way, the conclusion is, if not flat, at least puzzling. While this title lacks spark, it is still offbeat enough to hold readers; be ready, though, because they're going to ask you what it all means when they're all done. JMD

BELTON, SANDRA *McKendree*. Greenwillow, 2000 262p

ISBN 0-688-15950-8 \$15.95

R Gr. 7-10

See this month's Big Picture, p. 49, for review.

BLACKWOOD, GARY *Shakespeare's Scribe*. Dutton, 2000 [224p]

ISBN 0-525-46444-1 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-10

Readers of *The Shakespeare Stealer* (BCCB 6/98) will remember Widge, the young apprentice, whose skill at "charactery" (shorthand) involved him in the Tudor theater by way of a plot to steal Shakespeare's plays. Now a happy member of The Lord Chamberlain's Men, Widge is looking forward to the prospect of a provincial tour (necessitated by the closing of the London theaters in the face of rising plague deaths); he's disturbed when his dear friend Sander chooses to stay behind, however, and he's uneasy about the competition offered him by a gifted new apprentice. The trip provides drama of its own, too: Mr. Shakespeare breaks his arm, requiring Widge to transcribe the ongoing work of *All's Well That Ends Well*, and Widge finds Jamie Redwall, his father (or is he?), who joins up with the troupe. As in the previous book, Blackwood creates an amiably atmospheric world of rogues and players, villainy and virtue; there are entertaining contrivances and accessible Shakespearean jokes aplenty but also an acknowledgment of the seriousness of the poverty, prejudice, and illness that shapes—and sometimes ends—the lives of Widge and his contemporaries. Blackwood also adds some effective tension around the enigmatic character of Jamie Redwall, whom many of the company members suspect in connection with ongoing misdeeds, and whose relationship with Widge

blends opportunism with kindness. This is a lively period excursion for readers of the first book or any teen intrigued by the old-fashioned theatrical life. DS

**BONNERS, SUSAN** *Edwina Victorious*; written and illus. by Susan Bonners. Farrar, 2000 131p

ISBN 0-374-31968-5 \$16.00

Ad Gr. 3-5

When Edwina's independent-minded great-grandaunt, also named Edwina, moves into a care facility after a hip-breaking accident, Edwina the younger is intrigued to find a box of her relative's old letters. In them, Edwina the elder sternly takes various public officials to task for bobbles in municipal maintenance; looking around her town, Eddy begins to think that such a campaign has its merits and uses her aunt's old typewriter and their shared name to fire off missives about current community difficulties. The new mayor, familiar with the legendary name and willing to overlook some of Eddy's juvenile misspellings as the prerogative of the aged, considers action a political necessity in the face of possible contributions, and Eddy finds her slightly fraudulent power inspiring and a little uncomfortable. The plot's rather dreamily unlikely (even in Aunt Edwina's possession of her own original fifty-year-old letters rather than carbons), and the final showdown, wherein Eddy comes clean at a mayoral presentation and slapstick hijinks ensue, is a bit sitcomish. The book offers an unusual premise and an invigoratingly civic-minded slant, however, and Eddy's achievements (aided by her friend Roger, who strategically mails the letters in order to give them the proper postmark) are impressive and understandably addictive. It's a brisk and cheerful read, and the idea practically begs for followup class projects; heaven help the local politicians. Black-and-white illustrations are bland and inoffensive, but they offer little beyond literal interpretation of the text. DS

**BRETT, JAN** *Hedgie's Surprise*; written and illus. by Jan Brett. Putnam, 2000 32p

ISBN 0-399-23477-2 \$16.99

Ad 3-6 yrs

This tale of "a speckled hen who laid an egg every day, only to have it taken by a little Tomten every morning" pits the hen and a helpful hedgehog against a hungry elvish thief. The animal pals fool the Tomten into taking first an acorn, then a strawberry, a mushroom, and finally a potato instead of the egg, at which point the Tomten threatens to eat the hen if not her egg. However, instead of the egg, he finds Hedgie in the nest the next morning, "all closed up in a tight round ball of needle-sharp prickles." This development sends the yowling Tomten back home with a new appreciation for his mother's porridge and leaves Henny and Hedgie free to enjoy the five baby chicks saved from the Tomten's pot. Unfortunately, this folklorish plot has neither action nor tension enough to distract readers from the twee child-speak of the pedestrian text and the logical lapses embedded in it: why, for example, does the "smooth round potato, even bigger than an egg" leave the Tomten "only half full"? The book also offers no help to young readers who might want to know more about who or what a Tomten is. Fans of Brett's expressive characters, flat backgrounds, and complex frames (here in faux-stitchery design) will, however, find the depth and visual interest they have come to expect. Viewers who pay close attention to pictures set into the frames surrounding the single- and (mostly) double-page spreads will be rewarded with additional story information, while more needle-pointillist details of the homey frames reinforce or

foreshadow events. Though not Brett's best work, this has some of the features that make her deservedly popular with close readers of visual texts. FK

BUNTING, EVE *Who Was Born This Special Day?*; illus. by Leonid Gore. Atheneum, 2000 32p  
ISBN 0-689-82302-9 \$16.00 R 2-4 yrs

Well before the Nativity story becomes meaningful to them, toddlers and preschoolers know in their bones that the approaching Christmas season, with its array of recurrent images, is important and exciting. Bunting offers here a true "first book" that will be welcomed by Christian parents trying to sort out the sacred and secular for the youngest offspring. Through a narrow focus on those most inviting denizens of the crèche scene, baby animals surrounding the manger, she engages the audience in a gentle question-and-answer game: "Who was born this special day?// Was it you, little lamb?// 'I was born back in early May/ when the breezes of spring chased winter away.'/ It was not the lamb." As each character states the circumstances of its birth, Bunting steadily guides listeners toward the central figure, "The child who lies in the manger bed,/ the shine of the star high overhead." There is no Biblical citation or theological reference here, only a tender demonstration that the baby is the most important element in this crowded scene. Gore's acrylic paintings are lavishly sweet and greeting-card romantic, with moist-eyed, plush-toy-styled animals luminously moon-bathed against a royal and deep turquoise blue night sky. Soothing and cozy, this could be a perfect bedtime choice for the weeks leading up to the Big Day. EB

CADNUM, MICHAEL *Redhanded*. Viking, 2000 135p  
ISBN 0-670-88775-7 \$15.99 Ad Gr. 7-12

Steven's an ambitious young boxer, trying to muster up credentials—and fees—to make it to the West Coast Golden Gloves. His energetic and slightly slippery sidekick, Raymond, is eager for Steven to meet Chad, a new friend with shady connections; a combination of boxing-earned arrogance, disappointment in his personal life (a breakup with his girlfriend and increasing discordance between his separated parents), and curiosity leads Steven into association with Chad. Chad's plans for a robbery seem Steven's only chance for his needed cash, but soon it becomes clear that the ringleader and the situation are out of control. Cadnum's usual taut, dark style is in evidence here, and the understatement of emotion provides an effective bleakness. It also, however, results in a certain opacity that makes the ending abrupt and the trajectory of the final scenes (wherein Steven's ethics rise to the fore, but not in time to prevent the victimization of a stranded motorist) disproportionately steep (though the climax offers a provocative discussion point). The hard edges of the dangerous enterprise interestingly parallel the hard edges of the sweet science, however, and there's an absorbing view of both worlds that will suit fans of Cormier and Crutcher as well as Cadnum. DS

CARLE, ERIC *Dream Snow*; written and illus. by Eric Carle. Philomel, 2000 32p  
ISBN 0-399-23579-5 \$21.99 R 3-6 yrs

This is a simple, well-told story about a simple farmer, the kind of guy who names his five animals "One," "Two," "Three," "Four," and, yes, "Five." From the splotchy snowflakes on the transparent dust jacket to the interior plastic overlays that cover the napping farmer and each of his animals in white blankets of dream snow that

kids can lift off to see the farmer and his horse, cow, sheep, pig, and rooster actually "safe and fast asleep" indoors, this book is built to attract children. But wait, there's more. When the farmer wakes, he dons his red snow suit to go outside into the snow, where the audience and all five animals watch him decorate a tree with colorful balls, silver streamers, and wrapped presents. There's also a battery-powered button that encourages readers to "PUSH HERE" to play a brief tinkling of bells designed to capture the magic of the season this Santa Claus-ish figure introduces when he shouts "Merry Christmas to all!" Carle's characteristic cut-paper collages have a textured intensity and heightened contrast that keeps the energy level high, and they combine well with the doodads to offer a satisfyingly cohesive experience for young audiences. Some viewers will be able to master the straightforward text in addition to the well-integrated visual and manipulative aspects of this enticing holiday package, and all of them will want to get their hands on it. FK

CHEANEY, J. B. *The Playmaker*. Knopf, 2000 [256p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-375-90577-4 \$17.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-375-80577-X \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-9

Fourteen-year-old orphan Richard Malory may be temporarily reduced to dock drudge for a firm of London wine merchants, but with his honest upbringing and the best education his rural Lincolnshire town could provide he proudly boasts, "No need to assume that I would have to toss kegs forever. . . . God willing I would rise; I was an Englishman." Although rising through the company ranks looks probable, a street riot and subsequent theft (staged by enemies Richard doesn't even know he has) force him to seek other employment, and he puts his declamatory skills to use as an actor apprentice with the Lord Chamberlain's Men (also the company of Gary Blackwood's Widge, in *Shakespeare's Scribe*, reviewed above), where shelter and disguise are more valuable job perks than salary. Although the boy shows glimmers of true ability on stage, there's little safety here either, for Richard is unwittingly involved, through family relations, in a Catholic plot to overthrow Elizabeth I, and he cannot discern friend from foe among his many pursuers. Richard recounts his adventures with wit, grace, and vivid insight into the conventions of stage and court: "[Elizabeth] played her part no less than I played mine, except that she never came off stage. . . . A necessary business, for she held the pride and fortunes of a nation in those fine white hands, and those artful poses she struck." This is a thriller replete with enough dank alleys, shrouded identities, arsonists and insurrectionists to please action-hungry groundlings, and it's polished with Shakespearean theatrical trappings to satisfy middle-school literati in the gallery. EB

CLINTON, CATHERINE *The Black Soldier: 1492 to the Present*. Houghton, 2000 [128p] illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-395-67722-X \$17.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-8

In this ambitious overview Clinton traces the history of black experience in the military from American colonization to the present, focusing on the racial discrimination that dogged the soldiers despite their proven abilities and heroism. Opening chapters, which include information about slave uprisings as well as black

participation in military campaigns, set a sluggish pace; with the paucity of information on individual soldiers, these discussions serve as little more than reminders that the earliest invasions and conflicts were multiracial affairs. Later, better documented periods facilitate a welcome shift from generalities to specifics, and the pioneering military careers of Henry O. Flipper, Charles Young, and the father and son Benjamin Davis make especially compelling reading. Clinton does not consistently discriminate between hardships endemic to military life in general and those peculiar to black soldiering. For example, Buffalo Soldier Frank Puller's observations about the harsh Montana climate were surely shared by white soldiers, and Clinton's own comment, "Ironically, it was wartime that created the opportunity for accelerated advancement of black soldiers," overlooks the fact that wartime creates opportunities for advancement among all soldiers. Her thesis that black military accomplishments went unrecognized by a white majority is, however, undeniably valid and amply demonstrated, and this long view may lead readers to more focused treatments such as Clinton Cox's *The Forgotten Heroes: The Story of the Buffalo Soldiers* (BCCB 12/93) or Michael Cooper's *Hell Fighters* (2/97). Period photos and an index are included. EB

COLLINGTON, PETER *Clever Cat*; written and illus. by Peter Collington. Knopf, 2000 32p  
ISBN 0-375-80477-3 \$15.95 R 5-8 yrs

Meddaugh's Martha (*Martha Speaks*, BCCB 11/92) is a clever dog, and now this British import offers Martha's feline counterpart in Tibs, the clever cat. Tibs gets tired of always waiting for his food and deftly wields the can-opener for independent access; his family, pleased with Tibs' accomplishment, gives him a door key (to save them letting him in and out) and a cash card (so he can go shopping for his own cat food). When Tibs gets a little excessive with the cash card, his family insists he get a job to repay his debts and to start paying rent. Soon Tibs realizes that his wonderful capabilities are providing him with a considerably more miserable existence than previously, and he returns to cat-level achievement and cat-life indolence. It's a change to see text in a Collington book (though the amazing Tibs remains drolly wordless), but the narrative is pithy and poker-faced, never overbalancing the art. The illustrations keep the colors subtle, with ginger Tibs the main focus. Position and detail carry a lot of impact (Tibs marches about determinedly on his hind legs as more knowing cats loll lazily about the neighborhood); there's a distance and restraint to the players (especially the humans, who have a somewhat doughy and doll-like look) that make the proceedings particularly amusing. This will confirm many cat lovers' secret suspicions about kitty capability. DS

CRUZ, BARBARA C. *Separate Sexes, Separate Schools: A Pro/Con Issue*. Enslow, 2000 64p illus. with photographs (Hot Pro/Con Issues)  
ISBN 0-7660-1366-9 \$19.95 Ad Gr. 5-8

Among the topics discussed within this series, the single-sex/coed school debate arguably has the most direct impact on middle-school readers, virtually all of whom (save, perhaps, home-schoolers) are enrolled in an educational institution of one variety or the other. Cruz divides her text into half a dozen chapters covering the highlights of the controversy, a cursory history of single-sex education in the U. S., cases for and against all-girls schools, and cases for and against all-boys schools. She reviews salient arguments regarding legality (in the public sector), academic



outcomes, and social outcomes of single-gender education in kid-accessible terms and introduces related issues of privilege, affirmative action, and racial stereotyping as they figure into the debate. Although each point of view receives a fair hearing, the authority of supporting evidence varies wildly, and it is incumbent on the reader to weigh the relative value of AAUW and *Journal of Educational Psychology* reports against popular surveys in the *Washington Post* and on the Web. To further muddy these murky waters, Cruz tends to generalize single-gender institutions without specific indication of income level, public or private status, or even grade level. Despite these shortcomings, this topic should generate considerable heat straight across a range of economic, religious, and racial academic populations and invite all students to weigh in with an opinion. EB

DASH, JOAN *The Longitude Prize*; illus. by Dusan Petricic. Foster/Farrar, 2000 [208p]

ISBN 0-374-34636-4 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-9

As the prestige of the eighteenth-century British merchant and naval fleets was threatened by an unfortunate propensity to run aground for lack of accurate charts and position reckoning, a Board of Longitude was established which authorized a £20,000 reward for the inventor of a system or device that could calculate longitude with precision. Rural English clockmaker John Harrison produced and refined just such a device, a seaworthy clock that could help calculate distance from a point of known longitude on land, and his decades-long battle to prove its effectiveness to a Board that openly favored a lunar calculation system is the subject of Dash's work. She navigates readers through the complexities of the rival systems with reasonable ease and does a good job of conveying the years of frustration and tedium that marked Harrison's dealings with the Board—too good a job, perhaps, since some of that tedium occasionally (unavoidably?) spills into her narration, and not all readers will share the redoubtable Harrison's determination to see this pursuit through. Petricic's black-and-white illustrations, particularly the inventive initial vignettes that open each chapter, puff some wind into the sails when the momentum slows, though, and a glossary, timeline, and index assist researchers pursuing this bittersweet tale of justice denied. EB

DESSEN, SARAH *Dreamland*. Viking, 2000 250p

ISBN 0-670-89122-3 \$15.99

Ad Gr. 7-10

Caitlin is devastated when her older sister, Cass, leaves home without warning and severs contact with the family, going to live with her boyfriend in New York instead of starting school at Yale. In the absence of her trailblazer and the family star, Caitlin becomes unsure of her place in the scheme of things and tries to squirm away from becoming just Cass' replacement. Joining the cheerleading team isn't as effective as she'd hoped, but she does find significance in her relationship with enticing and offbeat Rogerson Biscoe. Soon Rogerson has all her attention and energy, taking her away from family, friends, and school; this absorption isn't just because of her love for him, but because he's taken to physically abusing her when she deviates from his wishes. Dessen creates a poignant portrait of a family stunned by forced change, and her depiction of Caitlin's increasing understanding of her sister (Caitlin finds that being the center of her mother's world isn't as delightful as she'd thought) is deft and authentic. The relationship with Rogerson is less effec-

tively examined, though; the initial connection is never really credible, seeming only a necessity for the drama of the abusive relationship. The shift from love to abuse, however, is sadly believable in its speed, and Caitlin's numbed narration makes her inaction plausible. The familial and relationship plots don't mesh as well narratively as they do in Caitlin's viewpoint and counseling sessions, but this is a thoughtful exploration (subtler than Gloria Miklowitz' *Past Forgiving*, BCCB 9/95) of a situation that's easy to get into and hard to get out of. DS

DEXTER, CATHERINE *Driving Lessons*. Candlewick, 2000 152p  
ISBN 0-7636-0515-8 \$16.99

R Gr. 7-10

Since Mattie's mother needs the summer to finish her thesis, Mattie returns to her South Dakota roots, staying with an old family friend and working at her great-grandmother's house, now being turned into a historical museum. Mattie's long been the constrained good girl ("My mother always wants me to be happy, and if I'm not, *she* gets unhappy. So then I have to pretend I've started to feel better so that she'll feel better, and it all spirals on like that"), and she's tired of it. She's also increasingly discomfited with her subtle but persistent status as outsider in her own life: her mother refuses to talk about Mattie's father, who died when Mattie was only four, so Mattie's excluded from her own family memories; she's restricted to being a day worker in the ancestral home where she spent much of her childhood; and her mother may soon be unbalancing the family equation further by remarrying. Mattie begins to form a friendship with Lester Prentiss (seventeen to her fourteen years), also a summer exile (as a consequence of some criminal mischief), who takes her out along the back roads for driving, making out, and rebellion. Dexter writes Mattie's narration with exquisite yet plainspoken perception as the teen begins to question the pattern of her family relationships and explore the possibility of shaking them up. There's nothing programmatic about Mattie's flirtation with being a bad girl: it's completely understandable in context, and the drifting into new ways defies easy categorization. The book captures the clean reality of the moment, depicting Mattie's malfeasance (in an echo of Lester's joy-riding, she steals a car and parks it in a barn miles away; finding that blame falls on Lester, she owns up) with understanding rather than didacticism. Readers pushing against their own limits will appreciate this insightful and nonjudgmental story. DS

DURRANT, LYNDIA *Betsy Zane: The Rose of Fort Henry*. Clarion, 2000 198p  
ISBN 0-395-97899-8 \$15.00

Ad Gr. 4-8

Sent to be raised by Great-Aunt Elizabeth following the death of her parents, Betsy now returns from the relative gentility of 1780s Philadelphia to the "Virginia wilderness" (now West Virginia) to rejoin her brothers at Zane Station. The journey is an eye-opener for the teenager, who is first accompanied by a family of Scots who have run away from the laird who bound them to service in his mines, and then chaperoned downriver by an old family acquaintance who is a half-mad Indian killer. She receives a lukewarm welcome from the brothers; although they are happy to see Betsy alive and well, they are also angry that she has freed family slaves and turned family heirlooms over to the safe keeping of a German minister. Moreover, she has arrived just as European-Indian relations have taken a decided turn for the worse and the brothers—all of whom have been held captive and come to respect native ways, and one of whom has married a Wyandot woman—struggle

to decide where their allegiance lies. Durrant bases her novel on the life of the real Betsy Zane, whose moment of fame involved a heroic dash for gunpowder to defend Fort Henry from British/Indian attack. Betsy's tale begins as a mild frontier road trip, but once issues of Indian and white relations emerge, the pace accelerates and provocative questions emerge concerning the actions that earned "patriots" like Betsy the title of hero. An afterword reviews historic background and Zane family history, and source notes are included. EB

FAGAN, CARY *The Market Wedding*; ad. from a story by Abraham Cahan; illus. by Regolo Ricci. Tundra, 2000 [32p]  
ISBN 0-88776-492-4 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 2-3

Morris and Minnie hawk their respective wares (fish and hats) at stands in the market across the way from each other, until one day their street calls get mixed up ("Fresh hats!" Morris cried. "Right out of the lake!") and they fall in love. Despite Minnie's protests, Morris plans to spend all his money on a glamorous wedding, thinking that when their friends hear about the magnificent fete, they will send only the finest gifts and thereby make them rich. Unfortunately, when the big day arrives, no guests come to the opulent wedding and reception. As Minnie and Morris walk dejectedly to their new home, they see all their friends, who explain that they were ashamed to come to such a fine wedding without clothes and gifts fine enough for the occasion, and a more humble party ensues at the newly rented flat. There is some heavy-handed exposition, and the narrative is adult-oriented, but overall the text flows smoothly. Blocks of text are framed in decorative borders in the style of the Arts and Crafts movement, which fits the time period depicted in the illustrations. Despite some awkwardly drafted figures, Ricci captures the crowded but homey atmosphere of early 1900s city life, with the tawny sepia tones evoking old photographs. Some young readers may be entertained by Morris' foolishness and engaged by the satisfyingly folkloric outcome of this tale of marriage and friendship. KM

FERRIS, JEAN *Eight Seconds*. Harcourt, 2000 [192p]  
ISBN 0-15-202367-4 \$17.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-10

Eighteen-year-old John is thrilled at the chance to attend rodeo camp with his oldest friend, Bobby; there he discovers in himself a burning desire to ride bulls and finds a new friend in the thoughtful Kit, a boy whose bullriding talent brings him admiration and envy. Looking forward to remaining friends with Kit after camp, John is shocked to discover that his new buddy is gay, and he's disturbed to find himself still attracted to Kit's magnetic personality—and maybe more. As the only male child in a family determined that he be a man's man, John finds it a struggle to sort out his feelings on the matter, and the situation gets even tenser when a spiteful classmate starts the predictable rumors about John and Kit's friendship. The bullriding plot never really takes off in its own right, and Kit's generally a predictable paragon. Ferris does offer some original touches, however: Bobby is untroubled by Kit's sexuality but uneasy at the notion that his friend from childhood might be gay, and rather than offering a happy romantic ending, the book makes it clear that John's misplaced anger towards Kit has destroyed the friendship completely, regardless of John's dawning realization about his similarity to Kit.

John's soul-searching and his fond but noncomprehending family are both credibly portrayed, and though the story is programmatic, there's enough real angst and consequences to evoke reader interest and sympathy. DS

FLEISCHMAN, PAUL *Lost!: A Story in String*; illus. by C. B. Mordan. Holt, 2000 32p

ISBN 0-8050-5583-5 \$15.95

R Gr. 3-6

When the lights go out during a lightning storm, a grandmother calms her nervous granddaughter with the story of a young mountain girl who sets out one winter day to find her missing dog. The girl counts on her footprints in the snow to lead her home, but "before she backtracked a mile, that snow had filled in her prints and the dog's. She was lost." The enterprising girl knows her woodlore, however, and she builds a lean-to for the night, finds hazelnuts to eat in the morning, and even makes herself a pair of snowshoes from "two thick slabs of bark off a pine tree." Suffice it to say the intrepid heroine finds her dog and gets home safely. Mordan's ink on clayboard illustrations (black lines against cream-colored paper) have a formal, engraving-like quality that suits the understated tone of the text. The grandmother illustrates her storytelling with plot-related string figures, diagrams of which are ably presented in small inserts showing the finished figure. Addenda include a brief history of string figures, instructions for making the figures used in the story, and a short list of "Other Books and Information" on this pastime. Kids with time (and string) on their hands are going to think this is the cat's . . . cradle. JMD

FLEMING, DENISE *The Everything Book*; written and illus. by Denise Fleming. Holt, 2000 64p

ISBN 0-8050-6292-0 \$18.95

Ad 1-3 yrs

As the title implies, Fleming here offers a little bit of everything for very young viewers: there are nursery rhymes and poems, and spreads treating concepts such as seasons, counting, shapes, the alphabet, and a multitude of other topics. As an added bonus, Fleming has scattered 119 ladybugs throughout the already vivid spreads, and a key at the back shows the number of ladybugs to be found (and counted) on each page. The illustrations are executed in Fleming's characteristic style, using a cotton fiber method that gives textural depth and intriguing color variations while creating easily identifiable creatures and objects defined by clean edges of color and strong, simple lines. Although there's often little connection between one concept and the next, browsing toddlers are unlikely to mind, and caretakers will be grateful for a book that offers such readable and entertaining variety. Concepts vary enough in difficulty that children at the right age for some of the book will be too old or too young for other segments. Nevertheless, Fleming has created a hard-to-resist browsing book, and children just learning to manipulate paper pages will find a treat at every turn. KM

FREEDMAN, RUSSELL *Give Me Liberty!: The Story of the Declaration of Independence*. Holiday House, 2000 96p illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-8234-1448-5 \$24.95

Ad Gr. 5-8

Many middle schoolers can use a reminder that American independence did not follow a simple path from colonial outrage, to proclamation of freedom, to warfare, but rather escalated through a love-hate relationship with the mother coun-

try, small acts of boycott and rebellion, bloody skirmishes, and a soul-wrenching debate on whether to sever all ties with England. The greater part of this title retraces the colonies' evolving identity as a people distinct from the English, acts by the Crown to raise colonial revenue and contain America within the empire's fold, and acts of resistance by Americans with differing views on the necessity of independence. The narrative's abrupt halt at the signing and announcement of the Declaration, and final chapters examining it as a "living" document and object of national pride, support the titular claim that this book is primarily about the creation of the document itself. Curiously, though, Freedman focuses only a single chapter on lengthy debates within the Continental Congress, the extensive editing of Jefferson's draft (only the slavery issue warrants any detail), and the enormous personal risk staked by the signers, all of whom instantly became traitors to the Crown. As a thorough exploration of the Declaration itself, this treatment leaves something to be desired; as a smooth retelling of the milestone events at the opening of the Revolution, however, the title will nonetheless have considerable collection value. A plethora of color and black-and-white illustrations, a chronology, bibliography, and index are included. EB

GALLOWAY, PRISCILLA, comp. *Too Young to Fight: Memories from Our Youth During World War II*. Stoddart, 2000 207p illus. with photographs  
ISBN 0-7737-31903 \$22.95 R Gr. 6-10

Galloway and eleven other Canadian authors share memories of childhood on the home front, offering a panoply of experiences that expand U.S. readers' understanding of how their northern neighbor's ties to England brought the war to their doorsteps well before Pearl Harbor drew the States into the fray. There are piquant, often comic recollections of applying leg makeup and tasting chocolates stored for years in mothballs, of a timid air-raid warden's fright in the local graveyard and a cigarette company's information card (now so blatantly ironic) on how to wear a gas mask. There are recurrent themes such as the "war guests" (English children sent to Canada for protection), wartime privations, changes of address and employment forced upon families by the war, and the powerful allure of Veronica Lake. Most compelling, though, is the thread of guilt that surfaces so often through these accounts, as authors acknowledge how the dual accidents of geography and youth itself sheltered them from the worst of the war: "I've sometimes wondered how I managed to wander through those years so blinkered against all the horrors . . . the only girls' magazine in those days, *Calling All Girls*, certainly had little in it about the war, just articles about fashions and hair styles and how to talk to boys." It is this thoughtful candor that will resonate with adolescent readers and raise the compilation's value beyond mere reminiscence to a primary history source. Black-and-white photos and an index are included. EB

GIFF, PATRICIA REILLY *Nory Ryan's Song*. Delacorte, 2000 [176p]  
ISBN 0-385-32141-4 \$15.95  
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 6-10

This compelling historical fiction about the Irish potato famine shows how quickly personal health and societal structures break down when nature won't provide and neither you nor your neighbors have an economic safety net. Nory Ryan, the appealing twelve-year-old narrator, has to draw on her strength (a believable and poignant bravery) and acknowledge her faults ("I didn't think") while dealing with

an increasingly desperate situation. A process of attrition leaves her responsible for her youngest brother, Patch, and eventually finds her alone with Anna, an old woman she initially fears but who turns out to be a source of support. The story ends on a high note, with Nory setting out to join the rest of her family in Galway prior to their emigration to America. Giff does justice to the historical milieu and places Nory's individual story of maturation firmly within it, providing episodes and images that touch the reader across time: the package from America that remains in the post office for over a year because Nory's family does not have the money to pay even the minuscule postage due is particularly powerful. Readers will agree with Anna that it's a lucky house to have Nory Ryan in it. FK

GREENBERG, JAN *Frank O. Gehry: Outside In*; by Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan. DK Ink, 2000 48p illus. with photographs  
ISBN 0-7894-2677-3 \$19.95 R\* Gr. 4-8

How can Greenberg and Jordan follow up their much-lauded achievement *Chuck Close: Up Close* (BCCB 5/98)? With an equally riveting introduction to the work of controversial architect Gehry, whose playful heaps and sweeps of gleaming, undulating metal and surprise packages of giant binoculars, copper domes, and wasp-waisted glass towers bear testimony to the author's assessment that "at heart he's a big kid with the best set of Legos in the world." Not only will readers, most of whom have undoubtedly never heard of Gehry, be mesmerized by outstandingly reproduced photos of his landmark buildings (many captured from a variety of angles), but they will also be intrigued by the outrage that often met Gehry's efforts and his risky policy of "refusing projects that required him to compromise." The authors seamlessly integrate relevant biographical details, tracing the artistic and business choices that paved the route to Gehry's renown and early life experiences that influenced imagery recurrent in his work. The architecture itself ultimately steals the show, and Greenberg and Jordan again prove themselves to be most engaging teachers, guiding readers through Gehry's career development with well-placed questions and pointers for interpreting the edifices as artistic statements. Gehry's work is a perfect vehicle for introducing children to the delight and power of contemporary architecture, and this presentation is worthy of its subject. EB

GREENE, STEPHANIE *Owen Foote, Money Man*; illus. by Martha Weston. Clarion, 2000 [96p]  
ISBN 0-618-02369-0 \$14.00  
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-4

Owen Foote (of *Owen Foote, Soccer Star*, BCCB 5/98, etc.) has returned, and he's got a new ambition: "When he was in kindergarten, all he had wanted to be was a paleontologist. Now that he was in the third grade, all he wanted to be was rich." The riches are desired largely with an eye to acquiring such indispensable items as plastic vomit and whoopee cushions, but mere desire isn't moving him towards his goal. Labor isn't Owen's favorite thing either, though, and his entrepreneurial plans—a fishing video and a dog-walking service—aren't the gold mines he'd been expecting; it's only when he helps a neighbor with a most pleasurable session of pond-building that he realizes it's possible for financially rewarding work to be really enjoyable. The lessons here are sufficiently restrained and effective to keep characters and story foremost (there's also a spirited and amusing flavor to his travails that makes them entertaining rather than didactic). The characters have

plenty of character: Owen's greed is both typical and believable, as is his frustration with the linkage between labor and profit; his semi-hapless friend Joseph makes an obliging sidekick as well as an appropriate recipient of Owen's generosity (Owen buys Joseph, a pet-loving kid with a pet-wary mother, a turtle). The topic is an unusual one in literature despite its commonality in life, and kids trying to make their fortune will empathize with Owen's financial dreams. Line-and-wash art has the same sturdy cheerfulness as the text. DS

GRINDLEY, SALLY *Who Is It?*; illus. by Rosalind Beardshaw. Peachtree, 2000 [26p]

ISBN 1-56145-224-6 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 2-4 yrs

This British import offers a series of gentle peekaboo-style guessing games for entry-level aficionados of folklore. Bits of Goldilocks peek from behind the bears' furniture as the text points out that "someone's eating Mr. Bear's porridge. Someone's sitting in Mrs. Bear's chair. Someone's sleeping in Baby Bear's bed. Who is it?" "It's Goldilocks!" the book triumphantly announces after a page turn, letting viewers see the bears and Goldy encounter each other. Other "someones" are Red Riding Hood's wolf, the troll under the bridge (waiting for Billy Goats Gruff), and Jack (of beanstalk fame); then a final someone (Mommy) watches the youngster read the book and play-pounces. (The "reading" idea is rather a flattering conceit for young viewers, who more than readers are the book's real audience.) This playful page-turn puzzle is frisky and effective, with pleasing repetition and restrained rowdy payoffs. Layered oils in Easter-bonnet colors run to button-nosed cuteness, but the oversized pages have real energy as well, with googly eyes and silly faces keeping any alarm at bay. This is eminently suitable for a cozy junior storytime or as a lively excuse for some bedtime giggles. DS

HAAS, JESSIE *Will You, Won't You?* Greenwillow, 2000 [192p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029197-4 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-029196-6 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-7

Mad (short for Madison) has decided that staying as invisible as possible is her ticket to social survival. Her outgoing mother is horrified, and she enlists Mad's grandmother in an attempt to change Mad's ways. This means that Mad's peaceful summer at Gam's expands from "riding, reading, and rotting" to social interaction, initially through Scottish Country Dance and then through politics (Gam is a state senator involved in a political battle over a timber bill). Mad's gradual change in self-image is effectively depicted (dancing encourages her grace and skill, and her grandmother, also afflicted with shyness, demonstrates the rewards of getting beyond discomfort); she's also realistically surprised by her own ability to meet and surmount obstacles. There are so many disparate elements that the point is sometimes obscured beneath the manifestations, however: in addition to the dance and politics, Mad struggles with her horse's response to the change of scene, her distant friend's blooming friendship with a popular girl, and her thoughts about her father, who deserted her before birth (and whose heroic fate is more dramatic than believable). Despite the book's multidirectionality, the characters here are compelling, and readers will support Mad's learning of new steps. DS



HESSE, KAREN *Stowaway*; illus. by Robert Andrew Parker. McElderry, 2000 [352p]

ISBN 0-689-83987-1 \$17.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-9

Nicholas Young, true-life stowaway on Captain James Cook's *Endeavour*, appears here as fictionalized recorder of the ship's three-year circumnavigation, which expanded the scientific catalog of flora and fauna, charted dimly understood regions of the Pacific, and, not coincidentally, claimed new lands for the British Crown. In his "journal," Young observes the "Gentlemen" as they collect and describe species unknown to Europeans, Cook as he navigates treacherous seas and equally perilous coastlines, and his crew mates who, with varying degrees of good and ill will, teach him the ropes and aid his rise to official crew member. The restrained tone and understated detail of Young's entries convincingly recreate a seafarer's notes, although an occasional liberal-minded comment seems inserted to soothe twenty-first century sensibilities rather than reflect contemporary mores: "The men found heapings of rock at a sacred burial site and thought it ideal ballast. . . . How would they feel if the Natives hauled off grave markers from an English cemetery?" In the tradition of a tersely worded log book, most of the high drama here is only implied. It therefore seems likely that a junior-high reader seeking an authentic voice might rather sling a hammock with Richard Henry Dana aboard the *Pilgrim*, while one who craves hundreds of pages of fictionalized adventure will find the *Indefatigable* of C. S. Forester's Midshipman Hornblower a happier ship. EB

HITE, SID *Stick and Whittle*. Scholastic, 2000 [208p]

ISBN 0-439-09828-9 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

At a Texas fishing hole in 1872, Melvin Fitchett, 27, meets Melvin Smyte, 16. Big Melvin (whom Smyte nicknames "Stick") is fleeing memories of the Battle of the Wilderness, and he hopes to find his long lost love, Evelyn; Little Melvin (whom Fitchett nicknames "Whittle") is fleeing from burned-out Chicago, and he hopes to find a purpose in life. For now, being the partner and bodyguard Stick doesn't realize he needs suits Whittle just fine. A ride to Kansas attunes the men to each other's foibles and temperament, and by the time they reach Wichita City they are committed partners ready to take on the cutthroats who, Stick learns, have abducted Evelyn (now a governess, and happily for Stick still unmarried) and her wealthy charge, Adeline. Hite packs a saddlebag full of timeless plot elements, from an exquisitely crafted rescue to the satisfying fruition of love at first sight, and freshens these tried and true devices with dead-on pacing and a strong sense of place. This is solid pa'dners-on-a-mission stuff, and the gruff affection between the endearingly mismatched pair of wanderers is a credit to the genre. EB

HOPKINS, LEE BENNETT, ed. *My America: A Poetry Atlas of the United States*; illus. by Stephen Alcorn. Simon, 2000 83p

ISBN 0-689-81247-7 \$19.95

R Gr. 3-6

This anthology of fifty poems treats the country regionally, dividing the states and the District of Columbia into eight sections for practical purposes; each section opens with a spread containing a map and some almanac-type facts about the

states, then poems address various aspects of the featured region (though not necessarily on a state-by-state basis). While the poems' regional assignments are sometimes arbitrary, and some of the verses have a textbooky stiltedness to them, there's nonetheless an evocative array of American images here. Some entries are explicitly associated with a locality (a selection from Carl Sandburg's "Crossing Ohio When Poppies Bloom in Ashtabula"), and some get their regional relevance from context (Douglas Florian's "The Hawk"); poets old and new appear together (twenty of the included verses were commissioned for this project). Alcorn's casein art makes use of strong contrasts between slightly shaded colors; layers of pigment give darker undertones that keep violet and ochre, olive and aquamarine from clashing, while stiff-brushed spatterwork softens the outlines. The art runs from style to style—there's a playful cubism in some images, and others are infused with echoes of Thomas Hart Benton, WPA murals, and other Depression-era American techniques (though Alcorn's line is clean and abstracted where those had a rippling plasticity). This has curricular utility written all over it, and it could spawn any number of assignments; it's also just an enjoyable and vivid poetic tour of America. DS

HOWE, NORMA *Blue Avenger Cracks the Code*. Holt, 2000 [296p]  
ISBN 0-8050-6372-2 \$17.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-10

Such resounding triumphs as Weepless Lemon Meringue Pie and the solution to Oakland, California's Second Amendment problems (*The Adventures of Blue Avenger*, BCCB 3/99) are hard to follow, and Blue finds himself in an unexpected slump. Moreover his true love, Omaha Nebraska Brown, has had her faith in male fidelity shaken to the core (thanks to Blue's misguided arrangement of a meeting between Omaha and her estranged father) and has left Blue rapidly boiling on the back burner of her affections. But an avenger-worthy intellectual challenge meets Blue where he (like many teens) least expects it—in his English class, where Dr. Wood steps boldly out of the anti-Stratfordist closet and announces to his students that Edward De Vere, Earl of Oxford was most probably the true author of Shakespeare's plays. As readers of Howe's first title well know, however, Destiny toys with us mortals, and everything from the plagiarism of a friend's computer game program to a lusty dog's amorous designs on Blue's grandmother's leg will impel or impede his quest for the evidence to vindicate the Oxfordian cause. Howe doesn't knit her many plot strands into quite the awesomely intricate pattern of Blue's first outing, but her narrative voice, dense with irony, ably carries the tale. Again, she shoots her verbal arrows right back at outrageous fortune itself, never at her stout-hearted characters, whom she draws with tender affection. EB

JOSEPH, LYNN *The Color of My Words*. Cotler/HarperCollins, 2000 [144p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028233-9 \$14.89  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028232-0 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-7

Twelve-year-old Ana Rosa lives in the Dominican Republic, and short-story-like chapters interspersed with poems tell of her life there. It's a dramatic and important year for her: her far-from-rich family begins to support her writing ambitions; she discovers that another man, not her Papi, is really her father; she develops a passionate crush on her brother's best friend; finally and most tragically, she

nearly stops writing forever after her beloved brother is killed in a standoff with local police when the village is slated for commercial development. This is an unusual setting, and Joseph offers a vivid picture of Ana Rosa's world, her island life, and her struggling family. There's a self-conscious writerliness to the style, however, that sometimes makes the prose stilted and the events distant, and the local-color vignettes don't combine well with the serious events of Ana Rosa's life. Nonetheless, this is an evocative look at a girl finding the importance of her voice in the face of loss. DS

KERNER, CHARLOTTE *Blueprint*; tr. from the German by Elizabeth D. Crawford. Lerner, 2000 [192p]

ISBN 0-8225-0080-9 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-12

"We clones are like little atom bombs. In interpersonal relationships, we explode much of what you have held near and dear since the beginning of human thought and what appeared unalterable, yes, even eternal." So says Siri, the first human clone in history, daughter of composer Iris Sellin. Upon discovering that multiple sclerosis was going to rob her of her music and eventually her life, Iris determines to create a second her who can carry on in her place. Though initially an adoring daughter-twin, Siri eventually resents Iris' control and the apparent predestination of her life and seeks her own identity. This import from Germany offers a satisfying and traditional sci-fi take on new possibilities. The shifting between first person and third person is a little confusing, and Kerner bobbles a bit on her science (wrongly claiming, for instance, that genetic identity creates identical fingerprints), but she hits the social and personal implications dead on. Particularly resonant is her depiction of Siri emulating Iris' negative traits (as selfish as Iris, she sees no need to let Iris be the arbiter of that self) and of her growing competition with Iris (including a play for Iris' boyfriend) as Iris sickens. The book also credibly creates a world attempting to figure out the place of cloning and the eternal problem of a technology that presents us with new moral choices. It therefore explores some of the same issues as Dickinson's *Eva* (BCCB 5/89), and readers drawn to both that title's ideological exploration and personal impact will find much the same satisfaction here. DS

KETCHUM, LIZA *Into a New Country: Eight Remarkable Women of the West*. Little, 2000 [144p] illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-316-49597-2 \$17.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-7

Rather than attempt to typify the experiences of women who settled the American West, Ketchum spotlights those who broke the mold of farmer's or rancher's or shopkeeper's wife. Representing a range of cultures and periods and places of settlement, their stories vary in intrinsic interest to young readers. Biddy Mason's journey from slave to Los Angeles philanthropist begins with considerable tension in her court battle to win freedom but loses steam in discussion of her real-estate dealing. On the other hand, Lotta Crabtree's rise from child performer to noted national stage personality has the appeal of a bio in a teen celebrity magazine, with the requisite elements of a pushy stage mom, career setbacks, and audience-pleasing defiance of ladylike proprieties. Ketchum is constant in her adulation, lavishing equal approbation on the LaFlesche sisters when they reclaim the Omaha

customs they abandoned at Indian boarding school, and on Chinese immigrant Mary McGladery Tape as she embraces a thoroughly Caucasian-American lifestyle and demands the same under law for her Chinese children. Occasional inconsistencies contribute some confusion (McGladery was "brought" to California by missionaries, yet seems to have been stranded there and "taken up" by a relief society), but readers who suspect there's more to the Western women than calico and covered wagons can find evidence of it here. EB

KIMMEL, ERIC A. *Gershon's Monster: A Story for the Jewish New Year*; illus. by Jon J Muth. Scholastic, 2000 [32p]

ISBN 0-439-10839-X \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R\* Gr. 3-6

Gershon saves up all his mistakes for Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Atonement; when that day comes, he gathers up his misdeeds (personified in the illustrations as shadow imps with wicked, laughing eyes), stuffs them in a sack, and, unrepentant, tosses them into the sea. Sure as the tide, Gershon's unconsidered acts came back to haunt him, "rising from the sea" in the form of a serpent-like monster "covered with scales like iron plates. On each scale was written one of Gershon's misdeeds." An act of bravery and repentance saves Gershon from the consequences of his deeds, and the monster's scales "melted into raindrops that fell like a summer shower, cleansing the sea." Kimmel's crisp but lyrical retelling of this early Hasidic legend has a steady pace and mounting tension that makes this a text certain to receive heavy use as a readaloud or told story, but it is as a readalone that this title will have the greatest impact. Muth's watercolors add a powerful emotional subtext to this already moving tale. The visual characterization of Gershon, in prayer shawl and yarmulke, sweeping his impish misdeeds into the cellar has both pathos and humor; the subtle palette (pale blue, sandy brown, creamy yellow) is clean and evocative, providing a peaceful background against which the protagonist, dressed in black, contrasts with a solid power. The compositions are elegantly arranged, whether featuring close-ups of Gershon's emotional reactions or showing his small figure in black coat and hat dragging a huge sackful of sins to the sea. The monstrous result of Gershon's negligence is appropriately horrific (some readers may be reminded of Brinton Turkle's nightmare in *Do Not Open*, BCCB 12/81) as it looms over the beach, blotting out the light of the blue summer sky. Muth's illustrations for *Come On, Rain!* (BCCB 4/99) revealed him to be an artist of exceptional skill at visual interpretation of text; this title will ensure that reputation. An author's note gives background on the story and the Jewish traditions from which it comes. JMD

KONIGSBURG, E. L. *Silent to the Bone*. Karl/Atheneum, 2000 261p

ISBN 0-689-83601-5 \$16.00

R\* Gr. 7-10

Thirteen-year-old Connor Kane seems to be the only hope of his best friend, Branwell: after his baby half-sister suffers a severe head injury, Branwell refuses to defend himself against the claim that he harmed Nikki and waits mutely in the Behavior Center while legal and familial drama swirls around him. Determined to peel away the layers of his friend's silence in order to find the truth and save him, Connor begins to communicate with Branwell nonvocally—through expression and through cards with the alphabet (and, later, key words and names) on them. In sorting out the situation Connor plunges himself into the delicate balance of

expectations and interpersonal relationships that makes up Branwell's and even his own life: Branwell's late mother's parents, his father and stepmother; Connor's adult half-sister (and Branwell's old babysitter), Margaret; a pizza delivery guy; and, most significantly, Nikki's au pair Vivian play significant roles in the story Connor pieces together. Konigsburg pieces her story together even more deftly than Connor does Branwell's: while the Louise Woodward overtones will tip readers off that the British au pair is to blame for Nikki's predicament, the exploration of the human mosaic that makes up Branwell's life and causes Branwell's silence retains a hypnotic fascination of its own. Connor's independent closeness with Margaret is an original and effectively depicted relationship that not only provides his search with aid and credibility but also gives him a window into the patterns of human hurt that have affected both families; it's Connor's personal knowledge of Branwell and his similar susceptibilities, however, that give him insight into the thrall in which Vivian held him and the anguish it caused. In the end, Connor not only excavates Branwell from his voicelessness (and bit by bit nails the real culprit) but also understands the power and necessity of that silence. The Kerr-edged complexity of design is played out with crystalline clarity, and readers will be fascinated by the intricate lives we all lead. DS

LADEN, NINA *Bad Dog*; written and illus. by Nina Laden. Walker, 2000 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8748-7 \$16.85

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8747-9 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 6-9 yrs

Our narrator starts out just a regular dog looking for a good time; inspired by a postcard depicting free-range chickens ("Hallelujah! I howled, 'Farm fowls for free!'", he and his friend Butch hit the road. After evading pursuers they find the farm, but chicken acquisition proves to be challenging. In the meantime, the cops have caught up with them, and despite an attempt to make a break for it, the pair are apprehended ("Then they threw the book at me. They took the chickens too. I heard someone say 'they were going to fry'"). The lengthy plot is less important than the delivery. Laden acknowledges Jack Kerouac (the narrator sports the obligatory turtleneck and beret) and Jack London, but Mickey Spillane is another echo here: machine-gun sentences (a ragged right margin emphasizes the clipped phrases) and a cynical edge make an effective springboard for the humor. The laughs come not just from parody but from a relentless barrage of wordplay, with puns ("We showed them we weren't chicken. That's when things turned foul"), twists on idiom ("Butch was beside himself, and I was beside Butch,") and doggy jokes ("So they say I'm a bad dog. I know I'm no Saint Bernard"), making the story funny on several different notes at once. Unfortunately the art isn't up to the story: the draftsmanship goes beyond new-wavey to stiff and amateurish, and the colors jostle for attention with a loudness unsuited to the tongue-in-cheek text. Many viewers may nonetheless think that it's hard to beat Beat pooches on the road. DS

LASKY, KATHRYN *Lucille's Snowsuit*; illus. by Marylin Hafner. Crown, 2000 [28p]

ISBN 0-517-80037-3 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 4-7 yrs

It's a snow day, which means Lucille's older brother and sister are out of school and ready to play in the snow. Lucille (who doesn't go to school in the first place)

is excited to join them, but she encounters a sartorial obstacle: the dreaded snowsuit ("She couldn't get her boots through the legs, and she couldn't pull them out to start over again. She was *really* stuck"). Mighty labors leave Lucille sweaty but only half-snowsuted, and by the time her mother completes the garbing, Lucille is almost too tired to go play. Fortunately, her siblings rise to the occasion, and she gets taken out into the snow and has a prolongedly grand time while her unsnowsuted siblings need to pop back in for periodic warmups. The ending is somewhat flat, but this is still an upbeat treatment of the bane of many children's winter. Lasky has an experienced eye for the realistic details of the clothing battle and a preschooler's weaponry therein—Lucille flops and whines and reiterates in an authentic and recognizable way. Hafner's watercolor and colored-pencil illustrations show Lucille and family as a happy collection of flop-eared pigs (with sufficiently human-shaped feet that boots remain troublesome); spot art of an expressive Lucille gives full dues to the rigors of dressing, and her contrasty orange snowsuit provides a jolly accent to the snowy landscape when she finally does make it outdoors. Adjust readaloud tempo to get over a few slow bits and provide a snowball finale all your own, and this will suit young piglets down to their chilly booted toes. DS

LATTIMORE, DEBORAH NOURSE *Medusa*; written and illus. by Deborah Nourse Lattimore. Cotler/HarperCollins, 2000 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027905-2 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027904-4 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-6

This sensational myth needs little embellishment: the beautiful Medusa is transformed by a vengeful goddess into a snake-coiffed creature whose visage is so terrible it turns the unwary into stone. Lattimore's competent storytelling is accompanied by visuals that combine classic fairy-tale images (castles, scenery, wavy-tressed women) and a roiling phantasmagoria of nearly psychedelic compositions. The proportions of the figures are often unwieldy, and the scenes in the royal court are darkly muddy and sometimes hard to see. The cover, however, will easily pull in readers with its image of a golden-haired, green-eyed (or is it snake-haired and reptilian-eyed?) Medusa. Lattimore's note gives background on the myth, but no specific sources are included. Monsters have a guaranteed audience, so dust off the rest of the picture book myths and plan a monstrously popular display. JMD

LAWRENCE, IAIN *Ghost Boy*. Delacorte, 2000 [336p]

ISBN 0-385-32739-0 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

Harold (Ghost Boy) Kline's post-World-War-II small town shows little compassion for anything outré, so the albino teen follows a time-honored path of escape and joins the circus. On the road to meet up with the center ring acts, Harold is befriended by several of the sideshow freaks, who take him under their wing and offer him the first real friendship he's ever known. When they join the rest of the troupe, though, Harold begins to realize that he is not nearly as freakish as diminutive Princess Minikin, the unsightly ape man, or acerbic Gypsy Magda. In fact, he is not relegated to the sideshow at all, but begins to train the elephants to play baseball in the hope that the novelty act will revive the circus's drooping reputation. Beautiful equestrienne Flip even flirts with Harold during her boyfriend's

absence, and it isn't until the Ghost has his heart broken and weathers a tragedy that he finds the strength to return home and rebuild life on his own terms. At first glance this novel seems to hold little in common, either thematically or stylistically, with Lawrence's rousing *The Wreckers* and *The Smugglers* (BCCB 6/98, 7/99). However, the author's innate skill as a yarn spinner and keen eye for the telling details that breathe life into the most improbable characters are again in evidence. The cast of tenderhearted circus freaks are as sharply drawn as the black-hearted villains of his previous works, and although breakneck speed gives way here to the measured pace of a *Bildungsroman*, Harold's inexorable movement toward self-discovery carries its own quiet tension. EB

LEWIS, J. PATRICK *Isabella Abnormella and the Very, Very Finicky Queen of Trouble*; illus. by Kyrsten Brooker. Kroupa/DK Ink, 2000 [32p]  
ISBN 0-7894-2605-6 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

The town of Trouble has its own monarchy, apparently, and its monarchy has its own trouble in the queen's insomnia: "It's impossible to find/ A mattress to impress Her Lady's/ Delicate behind!" After much agonizing, the king seeks the advice of his subjects on the matter ("Shall I sleep her in a casket?/ Or the gardener's wheelbarrow?"). The Keeper of the Royal Cat, little Isabella Abnormella Pinkerton McPugh, offers the solution of a queen-sized waterbed, the queen's nights are saved, and Isabella gets adopted by the king and queen in recompense for her wonderful solution. The conceit is an entertaining one (vaguely reminiscent of Milne's "The King's Breakfast"), and the whimsy is generally kept within workable bounds. The scansion sometimes trips over itself and it will take unwary readers-aloud with it if they're not careful, but practice will ensure that the tetrameter rolls off the tongue. The illustrations make the town-kingdom of Trouble into a fascinating and original world: Brooker uses oils and collage, splicing together painted sections in a mosaic effect for large items and layering bits of photography on top of and alongside the hand-drawn features (the border on the queen's coverlet switches cheerfully from paint to borrowed collage bit and back to paint again). Colors run to warm Tuscan buff and stone, punctuated by royal purples and shiny decorative touches (such as the delicious bits of pattern in the royal costume), and the wide-eyed and pliable faces, whose lines recall the work of Will Hillenbrand, have a wonderfully comic joie de vivre. This would work both as an antic daytime pleasure and an offbeat bedtime windup. DS

LOURIE, PETER *Mississippi River: A Journey Down the Father of Waters*; written and illus. with photographs by Peter Lourie. Boyds Mills, 2000 [48p]  
ISBN 1-56397-756-7 \$17.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-6

Lourie again incorporates geography, history, regional lore, and traveler's adventures into a breezily readable armchair tour of a recent trek—this time down the Mississippi by canoe, foot, collapsible bicycle, barge, and yes, a few cheater's jaunts in motorized vehicles. He begins at Lake Itasca in Minnesota, briefly losing his way by canoe among the false channels leading from the lake, then picks up speed making his way through locks that dwarf the tiny craft. Frequent stops and side trips find him examining the last remaining wooden-hulled steamboat, exploring a makeshift Union Army canal, chatting with a river pilot, visiting the cemetery at



Vicksburg, and arriving in New Orleans just in time to greet an approaching hurricane. Like any vacationer with pictures to show, Lourie offers many tiny and cramped photos (featuring, of course, the traveler himself in studiously natural poses); but some—like the full-spread barge tow or the close-up of a rickety houseboat—are impressive indeed, and they're intelligently mixed with black and white period photos of the same stretch of river in days gone by. Although Lourie can only stop long enough for the briefest descriptions of sights along the way, he ably conveys the romance of the journey itself and his intense enthusiasm for regional exploration. EB

LYONS, MARY E. *Dear Ellen Bee: A Civil War Scrapbook of Two Union Spies*; by Mary E. Lyons and Muriel M. Branch. Atheneum, 2000 [176p] illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-689-82379-7 \$17.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

When antebellum Richmond socialite Miss Bet Van Lew frees her slaves, she is delicately avoided or openly shunned by her peers, and the near-obsessive affection she lavishes on young ex-slave Liza—sending her to school in Philadelphia and minutely planning the child's future as a teacher for black children—strains her society's most generous definition of eccentricity. Liza, however, is not as tractable as Miss Bet could wish, resisting and thwarting this master plan at every turn. But when the Civil War breaks out and teenage Liza and her new husband are stranded behind Confederate lines, Liza joins Miss Bet in a pro-Union espionage conspiracy, posing as a slave in the Jefferson Davis household and feeding information under the moniker Ellen Bee, a code name for correspondence between her and Miss Bet. Lyons and Branch employ the now-ubiquitous journal format here with some justification; portions of the real Bet Van Lew's diary are extant, and there is evidence Liza may have kept a book as well. It is Liza's voice, though, that makes this fictionalized account particularly compelling. This is no humble freedman grateful for the largesse of an enlightened owner but a single-minded adolescent with a clear conviction that freedom is not a gift but a right. She harbors a prickly affection for Miss Bet—one she is often loathe to admit much less indulge—but she doggedly, even rebelliously enters into an early marriage and arranges her life squarely on her own terms. The strained, often hurtful relationship between the two women provides a fascinating counterpoint to their commitment and cunning as spies. EB

MACCARONE, GRACE *A Child Was Born: A First Nativity Book*; illus. by Sam Williams. Scholastic, 2000 [26p]

ISBN 0-439-18296-4 \$10.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 2-5 yrs

In an effort to make the Christmas story accessible to a very young audience, Maccarone's rhymed retelling strips the tale down to its thinnest possible outline. Verses tend to be choppy and strained: "Tired and worn,/ they went to the inn—/ no room for her,/ no room for him./ Instead,/ they slept in a shed—/ straw for a bed." Williams' grainily outlined watercolors present a fairly credible (albeit very spacious) Bethlehem, although frisky mice, cuddly tubby sheep, and a grinning pet dog exude their cuteness at the expense of authenticity. Still, Williams renders a Mary and Joseph who seem truly delighted with their baby, and Magi who are

thoroughly charmed by the unswaddled, wiggly-toed little King who reaches for proffered treasure with the innocent covetousness of Everykid. This easy, natural warmth may be enough, in the end, to carry the day. EB

MARTIN, RAFA *The Language of Birds*; illus. by Susan Gaber. Philomel, 2000 32p

ISBN 0-399-22925-6 \$15.99

R 6-9 yrs

Two brothers set out to seek their fortunes taking gifts of golden coins provided by their father. The eldest son, Vasili, "took his coins, went to the fair, and spent his money on every pleasure, eating and drinking until the gold was gone"; the younger brother, Ivan, goes into the woods, and after saving a baby bird fallen from a nest he is taught the language of birds by the fledgling's grateful mother. The brothers go adventuring together, and it is only Ivan's ability to understand the language of birds that saves them from disaster. There is no real villain here and that undermines the dramatic tension; still, Vasili is an engaging rascal, and honest Ivan merits his ultimate reward (marriage to the czar's daughter and half the kingdom). Despite occasionally choppy dialogue ("'Father,' said the princess, stepping forward. 'Do free Vasili. He must attend the wedding. For tomorrow I shall marry Ivan. My mind is made up'"), the text maintains a rolling pace and lends itself easily to reading aloud or storytelling. Acrylic paintings echo Russian folk art, with borders of birds, feathers, and bird feet running around the edges of the full- and double-page images; inserts stylistically similar to lacquered brooches decorate pages of text. The compositions give some unique perspectives on the action: bird's-eye views are rivetingly dramatic and thematically appropriate, and the seascapes are particularly effective. This is an unusually robust, inviting folktale setting and Martin peoples it with amiable characters headed for an even more amiable conclusion. JMD

MASTERMAN-SMITH, VIRGINIA *First Mate Tate*. Cavendish, 2000 [160p]

ISBN 0-7614-5075-0 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-9

First Mate (real and never-used name Emily) is only in eighth grade, but she's the mainstay of her family: her father's a compulsive gambler who shakes his kids down for money and has lost all vestige of reliability, and her ineffectual mother merely chases after her father. In addition to taking emotional charge of her five younger brothers and sisters, First Mate is also determined to take financial charge, not only throwing herself into a paper route that helps support her family but also forming the Tate Bank, an enterprise of dubious legality that provides loans to classmates at lucrative—and usurious—rates. Her real ambition is to accrue profits sufficient to enable her to buy back her father's boatyard, which was sold to cover his gambling debts, but the increasing familial dysfunction (First Mate realizes that her mother has joined her father in gambling) makes even her more modest goals problematic. Masterman-Smith writes with a rough energy and vigor suitable to the scruffy and determined First Mate, and her subject matter and setting are unusual and convincing. Unfortunately, the abrupt shifts of topic and tone become disorienting, and the didactic turn and problem-novel ending (the family gets help, and the final scene takes place at a Gambler's Anonymous meeting) are a disappointment after the book's early vigor. The portrait of youthful loan shark First Mate is a vivid one, however, and she'll evoke the sympathies of kids aware of the myriad burdens adults can thrust upon youth. DS

McCARTY, PETER *Baby Steps*; written and illus. by Peter McCarty. Holt, 2000 32p  
ISBN 0-8050-5953-9 \$16.00 R 4-6 yrs

This spare, descriptive picture book chronicles the life of the author's daughter, Suki, from one day to one year old. The text has more gentle gravity than plot, but there are some fresh touches ("With her fat cheeks and pink pajamas, she looks like a flying piglet") and offhand acknowledgments of reality ("... and for the moment, she is quiet"). The softly shaded black-and-white pencil drawings have a breathtakingly expressive photorealism: square portraits are infused with light, and the deft yet delicate modeling of Suki's face and limbs has a near-tactile fidelity. The result is affecting and elegant, but those affected are most likely to be adults, more able than youngsters to appreciate the subtle visuals and pared-down text. The children fascinated with babies, however, will consider this riveting, and kids expecting a new sibling may well find this a quietly comforting explanation of the changes of the first year. DS

MCNEIL, FLORENCE *Sail Away*; illus. by David McPhail. Orca, 2000 [32p]  
ISBN 1-55143-147-5 \$15.95  
Reviewed from galleys R 4-7 yrs

While the opening credits and dedications roll, a pirate-costumed boy drags a basket of stuffed animals and a boxed pirate ship model to the foot of the bathtub; a turn of the title page finds the boy in his full-blown fantasy as he and his now large-as-life crew ready their vessel for their adventures. The preparations are arduous and specific: "After you scrape the bottom/ paint the hull. . . ." Captain and giraffe shear away the barnacles with toy swords, and rabbit dangles from the bowsprit with paint brush in hand ("You step the mast"). Giraffe head-butts the timber toward the hole in the decking, while bear, parrot, and crocodile heave on the rope and tackle. Cream bordered line-and-watercolor illustrations, in rich hues subtly suggestive of handtinting from bygone days, clearly convey how each order is executed. Better still, they're really very funny, and it won't take long for viewers to note buccaneer allusions in the rabbit's black eyepatch (and he invariably raises his telescope to his patched eye), crocodile's peg leg, and elephant's tattooed tribute to "Mom." A "Sailor Talk" glossary provides a kid-friendly recap ("bail the bilge—take all the water out of the inside of the boat") and assures the audience a grasp of nautical esoterica with which to amaze parents and peers. EB

McNICHOLS, ANN *Falling From Grace*. Walker, 2000 [192p]  
ISBN 0-8027-8750-9 \$16.95  
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 6-10

The small town of Prosper, Arkansas between the world wars is a remarkably eventful place for thirteen-year-old Cassie. First, Cassie's older sister (whose boyfriend had recently committed suicide) runs away from home, then Cassie finds out that her father is having an affair with the new preacher's young wife, then Cassie's oldest brother elopes and her fourteen-year-old brother's best friend dies after drinking bootleg liquor made with wood alcohol. At the same time, Cassie has to cope with the disloyalty of her own former best friend and the romantic attentions of a young Hungarian immigrant who returns the unkindness he receives from the Klan-ish locals with a dignified generosity that is, as Cassie herself admits at one point, "too good to be true." Characters such as Cassie's Sunday school nemesis Marylou are

similarly overdrawn, while still others, like her unsympathetic father, resolve their problems with unrealistic abruptness. Still, though the emotional and practical implications of the novel's varied events are not always fully played out, Cassie's voice—sometimes naïve, but often perceptive—delivers insights into the complexities of family life ("I guess there is always one of us they are going to be more worried about than another") and the damage done by small-town gossips like her Aunt Opal, whose stories make "the people listening feel as if they have been through the experience themselves and are like to die from it." Readers of Cassie's story, on the other hand, should suffer no such ill effects from her more objectively told tale. FK

MILLER, WILLIAM *The Piano*; illus. by Susan Keeter. Lee & Low, 2000 32p  
ISBN 1-880000-98-9 \$15.95 Ad 4-7 yrs

While her mother and brothers are at work in the cotton mill, Tia searches the streets of her town for music. Her exploration takes her to the "white" side of town, where she discovers a different kind of music than she had ever heard before coming from a large house: "The melody drifted lazily across the wide, green lawn. It made Tia think of castles, mountains, and deep new snow. The music took her far away from the hot, dry town." She takes a tip from the hired boy, showing up to work as a maid for Miss Hartwell, an aging white lady, to get closer to the music. Once inside, Tia discovers the piano, "bigger than any she had ever seen. The black wood shone brighter than a new pair of Sunday shoes." Precocious Tia offers her wages in exchange for piano lessons. Miss Hartwell agrees to teach Tia but will not accept the wages as payment. The two begin lessons, with Miss Hartwell playing through her own pain of arthritis. Keeter's earthen-toned oils complement the warmth of the text, creating energy through varied perspectives on the piano and its players; however, awkwardly drafted figures detract from the overall effectiveness of the paintings. The idealized characters (the poor black child who is not lured by higher wages down the street, and the wealthy white woman who does not mind her hired help playing her piano) allow for predictable moments of reconciliation (Tia rubs Miss Hartwell's arthritic hands with warm water and salt, and Miss Hartwell shares the same kindness when Tia's hands hurt from extra work she has attempted). Stilted language slows the story's already leisurely pace, and the historical setting is nostalgically generic. Nevertheless, Miller's story of interracial, intergenerational friendship may strike a chord with some listeners. EAB

MILLS, CLAUDIA *Lizzie at Last*. Farrar, 2000 [160p]  
ISBN 0-374-34659-3 \$16.00  
Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-7

Readers of *Losers, Inc.* (BCCB 4/97) and *You're a Brave Man, Julius Zimmerman* (9/99) may recall Lizzie Archer as the diminutive math nerd with a crush on Julius' best friend Ethan. Here she gets a book of her own, in which she embarks on her seventh-grade year. Between the encouragement of her visiting aunt and the barbs of an influential classmate, Lizzie decides to find a new, more mainstream persona, relegating her romantic white poetess dress to the back of her closet and adopting tank tops, strategic giggles, and learned helplessness. Her showing the pendulum in the other direction has some genuinely beneficial effects—she finds a real friend and discovers some new capabilities in herself—but she also struggles with being a

copy of popular Marcia. Consequently, she finds herself putting up with things she dislikes, abjuring activities she genuinely enjoys, and jeopardizing her grades and relationship with Ethan when, in an effort to shed the nerdy appellation of “always right,” she makes deliberate errors on their shared math work. Reminiscent of Susan Shreve’s *Goodbye, Amanda the Good* (BCCB 2/00) but more credibly equivocal, this is a perceptive account of a girl’s adolescent encounter with the possibilities of self-definition. Mills is particularly deft at depicting intelligent Lizzie’s novice attempts at applying that intelligence to social relationships, quantifying the rules as she has so successfully for math (“Lizzie got the message: green top, yes; being good at math, no”). The book also sensitively avoids the one-note “be true to yourself” message, instead investigating Lizzie’s ability to discover new parts of herself and to assess the difference between those new parts and problematic pretense. Readers will find it reassuring to see Lizzie bravely and successfully negotiate the dangerous waters of junior high. DS

MONTES, MARISA *Something Wicked’s in Those Woods*. Harcourt, 2000 [224p]  
ISBN 0-15-202391-7 \$17.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-7

Javier (Javi) and Nico have been uprooted from their Puerto Rican home after their parents’ death; now they’re trying to adjust to life with their aunt Amparo in California. Little Nico settles in quickly, but eleven-year-old Javi chafes at enforced English and misses his family’s homey ways. He’s even more upset when he realizes that Nico’s imaginary friend, a source of Nico’s contentment in his new home, may actually be a ghost. Aided by the girl next door, Willo, Javi investigates the matter. Soon manifestations increase, and it becomes clear that Nico’s little ghost friend is not the only source of supernatural disturbances. The set-up is promising and the ghost (a child kidnapped in the 1930s and never found) is a well-conceived one in the “shades with unfinished business” category. The plot gets way out of hand, however, with discovery not only of a second ghost but Javi’s clairvoyant and psychokinetic powers, plus there are threads about Javi’s adjustment and an unpleasant librarian, yet the story still skips some elements (most ghost story aficionados, for instance, would link the kidnapped boy’s ghost to the possibility of solving the mystery of his disappearance, but the solution here is happenstance). Dialogue and character are also often stilted; the depiction of Amparo, a psychologist, leaves her a martyr to the exigencies of plot as her sternness with Javi on his supernatural claims makes her unsympathetic and unbelievable. Spooks still retain their lure, however, and kids who’ll follow ghosts anywhere may wish to follow them here. DS

NAPOLI, DONNA JO *Beast*. Atheneum, 2000 [272p]  
ISBN 0-689-83589-2 \$17.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 8 up

Like Robin McKinley’s second novel based on “Beauty and the Beast,” *Rose Daughter* (BCCB 10/97), this is a complex development of the fairy tale into a long fictional account. Napoli draws on elements of Charles Lamb’s 1811 version, and the Beast himself tells the story. Born Orasmyn, prince of Persia and lover of rose gardens, he is cursed by a *pari* (fairy) for violating an Islamic ritual. His transformation into a lion means that his father, the Shah, will hunt him down, so he wanders first to India in an attempt to find a place as king of beasts, then across Europe to France,

famous for its roses. Part Four, which comprises the second half of the book, becomes an elaboration of the fairy tale, set in an isolated castle to which the Beast has retreated. (Not surprisingly, this section exerts charismatic appeal and evokes Napoli's most powerful writing.) The first part of the book is sometimes slow and full of Persian words which Orasmyn explains in English, a somewhat unnatural narrative device. On the other hand, every scene is fully imagined, and readers drawn to romantic fantasy or familiar with Napoli's earlier work, including her Rapunzel novel *Zel* (BCCB 7/96), will experience Orasmyn's long journey as anticipation of a delicately nuanced, transformative relationship. BH

NOBISSE, JOSEPHINE *John Blair and the Great Hinckley Fire*; illus. by Ted Rose. Houghton, 2000 32p  
ISBN 0-618-01560-4 \$16.00 Ad Gr. 3-6

Halfway through a nerve-racking journey through forest fires from Duluth to St. Paul on September 1, 1894, the crew and 150 passengers of *The Limited*, Train No. 4, were stopped by an equal number of refugees from a fire in Hinckley, Minnesota and informed that the railroad bridge was out, so there was no escape south past the fires. After taking on these frantic men, women, and children, the engineer made a decision that saved the lives of more than three hundred people: he decided to return the train to Skunk Lake so everyone could take refuge in its "shallow, putrid water." This detailed account does not focus the bulk of its attention on Engineer Jim Root, however, though his actions and those of the train's conductor get their due; this history-based picture book focuses instead on the increasingly heroic efforts of John Wesley Blair, an African-American porter, to aid and comfort the passengers under his care. The intimacy of this perspective (emphasized by the questionable decision to refer to Blair as "John") is somewhat undermined by the external perspective of the narration, which in attempting to do justice to the whole story generally eschews dialogue and finally offers few insights into Blair's motivations. Similarly, the sooty haze overlaying the dramatic watercolor illustrations effectively conveys the overwhelming heat and horror of the landscape through which the train and passengers passed, but this same smudginess makes the characters—with the exception of Blair—blotchy and indistinct, often leaving significant features of the social landscape (including race) ambiguous. An epilogue offers more information about Blair and the fire, but the lack of bibliographic information may frustrate young researchers. However, for many readers the information and images provided will make this a powerful one-stop introduction to a little-known historical event. FK

NYE, NAOMI SHIHAB *Come With Me: Poems for a Journey*; illus. by Dan Yaccarino. Greenwillow, 2000 32p  
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-15947-8 \$15.89  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-15946-X \$15.95 R Gr. 4-7

Sixteen poems depict different aspects of going places: subjects include imaginary voyages, the pace of travel, arrival in new places, the trajectory of words, and personal journeys of growth. There's a cool musing to some of these ("Once/ by mistake/ she tore a map/ in half./ She taped it back,/ but crookedly./ Now all the roads/ ended in water"—"Torn Map") that recalls Elizabeth Bishop's poetry of travel and place, but there's also some fantastical voyaging ("I got mad at my mother/ so I flew to the moon"—"Mad") and journeys of growth ("First grade takes twenty

years to get through/ But second grade takes only ten"—"Spinning"). Nye uses sophisticated metaphor and oblique evocations of emotion in simple and concrete phraseology, making the poems conceptually challenging yet literarily accessible. The visuals are bold and dramatic, making excellent use of collage and mixed media (maps are cleverly used not only in the design—a tiny piece of San Francisco pops up in various corners—but sometimes also the figures themselves). Slightly blurred spatterwork silhouettes are simultaneously solid and shadowy under paint and collage clouds, and some reverse silhouettes balance out the cast; speedy, approximate brushstrokes provide features and outlines. The result is an elegant but not entirely happy marriage: the strong, simple design punctuated with primary colors has a youthful look that will arouse suspicion in kids old enough to understand the poetry, but primary graders drawn by the art will find much of the poetry flying over their heads. Some of the easier poems will make effective readalouds, however, and older readers may find an interest in design and poetic explication sufficient motivation for enjoyment here. DS

OBERMAN, SHELDON, ad. *The Wisdom Bird: A Tale of Solomon and Sheba*; illus. by Neil Waldman. Boyds Mills, 2000 [32p]

ISBN 1-56397-816-4 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

The Queen of Sheba travels a great distance and brings many gifts to meet the wise King Solomon, and she makes one request of the king: that he teach her "something worth all these gifts and all my time and trouble." When he tries and fails, the queen makes another request: "Build a palace out of bird beaks." Birds flock to the palace, giving King Solomon their beaks, but the hoopoe bird is missing. When the little bird is found, it asks the king three questions; the answers to these questions point to the cruelty of taking the beaks from the birds, and King Solomon relents. Although he expects the Queen of Sheba to be displeased, she is not, instead asking him to reward the hoopoe bird for its wisdom. Framed scenes appear against backgrounds of geometric patterns in horizontal lines, reminiscent of tapestries, in a palette of cool sky blues and desert taupes. Although the figures are somewhat static, the overall formality of the illustrations works well with Oberman's retelling, which uses repeated refrains of memorable phrases to punctuate the story. A detailed source note is included. While too stately for storytime, this tale will be effective when shared one on one, and it may also find a place in religious settings and in classroom discussions of character and wisdom. KM

PALATINI, MARTHA *Bedhead*; illus. by Jack E. Davis. Simon, 2000 34p

ISBN 0-689-82397-5 \$16.00

R 6-9 yrs

Oliver gets up in the morning and goes to the bathroom. He "gave his front teeth a passable brushing. And then. . . In a gunkless corner of the soapy silver soap dish . . . in a fogless smidgen of his father's foggy shaving mirror . . . right there on the hot water faucet, for heaven's sake . . . he saw it! It was BIG. It was BAD. It was . . . BEDHEAD!" His agonized howl brings Mom, Dad, and sister Emily careening into the bathroom, where they all attempt to tame Oliver's unruly mane with water, gel, mousse, hairpins—but to no avail. Stuffing Oliver's red hair into his "faithful, old, battered, but true-blue baseball cap" is a temporary solution, at least until Oliver gets to school and finds out that it's class picture day. Bad hair is obviously a growing problem, because Oliver is not alone in his predicament (see



Stewart's *Harriet's Horrible Hair Day*, BCCB 2/2000). Palatini sets up each slapstick moment with deadpan dialogue exchanges that point out the absurdity of poor Oliver's situation. With pacing similar to an *I Love Lucy* episode, *Bedhead* is prime fodder for group readalouds or story theater. Davis' caricatured characters have mobile faces with emphatic features that enthusiastically enhance the emotional action. The motion of Oliver's swirling red hair is picked up by the pinwheel-patterned wallpaper, and the strong curves of heads, hair, and bodies result in a giggle-provoking compositional maelstrom. Rosy skin tones, orange hair, and pink-tipped noses contrast with the cool green of the bathroom tiles and pick up answering pink tints strategically placed in the pink soap, pink washcloth, and even the pink toy tugboat floating in the sink. Davis fills every bit of space, placing players' reactions at center stage and making his characters stand out as if spotlighted against low-key background colors. This doesn't have quite the fizz of Palatini and Davis' first pairing (*Mary Louise Loses Her Manners*, BCCB 5/99) but it's a hair-raising trip to the absurd just the same. JMD

PAULSEN, GARY *The Beet Fields: Memories of a Sixteenth Summer*. Delacorte, 2000 [192p]

ISBN 0-385-32647-5 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 9 up

Paulsen's novels often have elements of fictionalized autobiography, but the author's note to this latest title clearly identifies it as memoir. Identified only as "the boy," the protagonist has fled abusive, drunken parents in an unnamed city. On the run, he finds work in the beet fields of North Dakota, where he earns money and becomes a temporary part of the community of Mexican migrant workers. The boy moves on to other farm work, and is robbed of his earnings by a larcenous deputy sheriff. After hitching a ride with an unfortunate driver (who is killed in a bizarre auto accident), the boy is picked up by the elderly Hazel, who puts him to work as her hired hand. A trip to the county fair results in the boy becoming a carny at a traveling carnival, handling the Tilt-A-Whirl ride, and shilling for the "Wild Man from Borneo" and for Ruby, a seductive kootch dancer. Paulsen's prose is packed with images that elicit a sense of portentous passage. The language is sensually concrete, the descriptions of the farms, the heat, even the food giving the reader a clear picture of the physical environment and the boy's place within it. The protagonist's carnal yearnings are a driving force throughout, finally assuaged by his deflowering by the earthy, voracious Ruby. Paulsen's coming-of-age memoir is nearly Steinbeckian in its unadorned but effective prose, and the events of the author's young life have a universality that will draw in readers heading for their own rites of passage. JMD

PRELUTSKY, JACK *It's Raining Pigs & Noodles*; illus. by James Stevenson. Greenwillow, 2000 [160p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029195-8 \$17.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-029194-X \$17.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-6

Here's a multitude of new poems (along with a couple previously published elsewhere) from one of children's literature's most reliable poets, accompanied by illustrations from his usual partner in diverting crime. Prelutsky fans will recognize the appealing absurdity ("It's raining pigs and noodles,/ It's pouring frogs and

hats”—“It’s Raining Pigs and Noodles”), mythical creatures (“There’s a Blopp in My Room!”), wordplay (“My underdog is overweight,/ he has an underbite”—“My Underdog Is Overweight”), and printplay (there’s maze-shaped poetry, shrinking poems, and boustrophedonic poems). This isn’t the top of this poet’s line, as there’s a hasty air to a fair amount of the scansion, and some of the word games lack their customary precision. Prelutsky short of great is still superior to most poets’ best, however, especially combined with Stevenson’s high-spirited and irreverent line-and-wash art. With inviting possibilities for read-alone, read-aloud, chorus, and performance, this one will offer welcome expansion to your poetry shelf. DS

PRICE, REYNOLDS *A Perfect Friend*. Atheneum, 2000 [128p]

ISBN 0-689-83029-7 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-6

Eleven-year-old Ben misses his late mother terribly, and his quiet solitary life with his father is leavened only by his goofy friend Dunk and his beloved cousin, Robin. New prospects appear in the form of a small family circus coming to town, a circus that claims, much to Ben’s delight, to have an elephant. Elephant-crazy Ben bonds with Sal the pachyderm (who is herself mourning the loss of family), finding a communicative rapport with her that brings his own problems and challenges into sharper focus. The book’s pace is somewhat ponderous, and young readers may get lost in the occasional contemplation of the ineffable. Adult novelist Price excels at the concrete details, however, with Ben’s pachyderm passion and the wonders of the large creatures evocatively depicted (“Just holding the serious weight of the trunk seemed to Ben like a privilege—the thick dry skin and the hundreds of delicate muscles that made a trunk even more useful than any hand”). There’s also a thoughtfulness and reverence permeating the story that makes it more satisfying than the comic tale of elephantine hijinks it might have become. Young people fascinated by the animal world will appreciate this empathetic account. DS

SAN SOUCI, ROBERT D. *Cinderella Skeleton*; illus. by David Catrow. Silver Whistle/Harcourt, 2000 32p

ISBN 0-15-202003-9 \$16.00

R 6-9 yrs

We’ve had Korean Cinderellas, Algonquin Cinderellas, and Egyptian Cinderellas, but no dead Cinderellas—until now. San Souci’s heroine is the “foulest in the land,” and thus, of course, the envy of her skeletal stepsisters, Bony-Jane and Gristlene. Her drudgery of hanging cobwebs and streaking windows isn’t going to keep her from going to Prince Charnel’s Halloween Ball, however, and she attends, dances, and falls in love with the host. Departing in haste, she leaves not a shoe but a foot (“Then off her foot came with a *snap!*”), which the prince uses to find his true love (eligible bachelorettes are hopefully dismembering themselves throughout the land, but only Cinderella’s dainty tibia offers a perfect match). The verse stumbles occasionally and rambles on a bit, but San Souci offers some inspired and ghoulish touches that will have young listeners howling (after Cinderella flees the ball, the disappointed prince has “in his hand, a foot—in his throat, a lump”). Catrow’s compositions sometimes diffuse their energy with overbusy compositions and colors (plenty of hot pinks and mustard yellows keeps things far from somber), but the art is endearingly ghastly: Cinderella’s limpid eye sockets balance out rosebud vestiges of a mouth, and she’s charmingly demure in her

flounces of cobwebby rags. Audiences sick of mushy fairy-tale stuff will want to join this Cinderella at her *danse macabre*. DS

SCHAEFER, CAROLE LEXA *Snow Pumpkin*; illus. by Pierr Morgan. Crown, 2000 [32p]

ISBN 0-517-80015-2 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 4-7 yrs

Gram can't believe it's snowing: "Too early," she said. "It's still October." Lily, granddaughter and young narrator, takes advantage of the unseasonable weather and with her friend, Jesse, builds a "snow pumpkin" (a snowman with a pumpkin head) in the park. Gram comes the next day to see it, but the snowman has melted; the children rescue the pumpkin head and take it home, where it sits smiling on the windowsill in paper-snowflake-decorated state on Halloween night. Schaefer's text has economy without sacrificing warm accessibility; her story follows the Asian-American Lily from apartment to park, where she and African-American Jesse join the neighborhood children in snow angels, snowball fights, sledding, and other winter frolics in a natural unfolding of the pleasures of a winter afternoon. Morgan's acrylics on sand-colored, fibrous paper have an opaque brightness that lights the simple, balanced compositions. The snow is the appropriate standout, resting like white icing on roofs, steps, and tree branches. The characters' expressions are clumsily articulated but their energy is inescapable, whether Lily is dancing up the snowy steps or Jesse is dancing rings around the snow pumpkin. Set in a nurturing, multicultural urban environment, this tale is a welcome change from the usual trick-or-treat oriented October stories, and readers-aloud are going to get a lot of ideas for follow-up activities from their snow-rapt listeners. JMD

SIERRA, JUDY *There's a Zoo in Room 22*; illus. by Barney Saltzberg. Gulliver/Harcourt, 2000 40p

ISBN 0-15-202033-0 \$16.00

Ad Gr. 2-4

Miss Darling responds a bit overenthusiastically to her students' request for a classroom pet, and Sierra describes the resultant alphabetical menagerie in twenty-six verses. Most go straight for the giggles ("Please don't ask to feel/ Our electric eel./ Because if you bug him,/ We cannot unplug him"), but a few attempt to slip in some rudimentary information as well ("Xenia the x-ray fish/ Swims serenely in a dish./ We like to sit and watch her dinner/ When it is already in her"). Not all poems are equally pithy, and sometimes the exigencies of rhyme win out over wit ("Our iguana, feeling sleepy,/ Made Meg's hair into a tepee,/ And her head is now his bed!"). Still, this is a pleasant classroom visit, with Saltzberg supplying a cartoon cast that regards the antics of their faunal classmates with only the mildest deadpan surprise, and Miss Darling and "Mister Smoot, the substitute" employ enough creative teaching strategies to make Howard Gardner applaud. EB

Sfs, PETER *Madlenka*; written and illus. by Peter Sfs. Foster/Farrar, 2000 42p

ISBN 0-374-39969-7 \$17.00

R 5-8 yrs

Madlenka is a little girl living "in the universe, on a planet, on a continent, in a country, in a city, on a block, in a house" or, alternatively, in New York. When she discovers that her tooth is loose, she rushes to tell all her friends: Mr. Gaston, the French baker, Mr. Singh, the newsstand vendor from India, Mr. Ciao, the ice-

cream seller from Italy, Ms. Grimm from Germany, and so on. All respectively rejoice with Mad, adapting her name to their own idioms and celebrating in ways that evoke their own heritage, until eventually she returns home, having gone "around the world" and having lost her tooth. There's an old-fashioned flavor to the story (the blithe parallel of "Asia" and "Latin America" with country names as places of origin is datedly sweeping), with the obligingly representative adult friends offering a gentle global exploration with Madlenka at the center of the world. The visual depiction is, as usual with Sfs, what lifts this above the ordinary. Madlenka lives inside a city square, built of black engraving-like hatch and crosshatch with her pink and gold presence the only color. She travels the outside of the square to tell her friends, and die-cut squares echo the city block but let her into various fantastical distant lands, whether it be a darkened collage of Paris, a green world of German folklore (wherein the hatching changes to white-line), or a sun-bleached expanse of African savannah. The artwork is elegant and its marvels child-accessible, especially in its eloquent visual evocation of the universe-expands-out-from-me philosophy. There's an urban flair to the milieu that will make this appealing to city kids and appealingly exotic to kids in different town plans, but all kinds will appreciate Madlenka's dentally inspired fantastic global voyage. A map is included. DS

STANLEY, DIANE *Michelangelo*; written and illus. by Diane Stanley. HarperCollins, 2000 48p

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-15086-1 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-15085-3 \$15.95

R Gr. 4-6

Stanley returns to the Italian Renaissance (*Leonardo da Vinci*, BCCB 9/96) with this illustrated biography of painter and sculptor Michelangelo. The author controls her adulation for her subject through a nearly dry recitation of facts, the tone reinforced by the severity of line in her mixed-media (watercolor, colored pencil, gouache) illustrations. The author looks closely at Michelangelo's long life, pointing out his often unrewarded service to the Roman Catholic Church, his difficulties with patrons, his troubled relationship with his family, his ego, his genius. She is careful to place the artist within his historical context, explaining the city states of Italy, the political turmoil and religious upheaval, and the intercultural warfare that served as background to the Italian Renaissance. This is a portrait of a man consumed by his passion for his art, a man who saw little reward (Michelangelo sent most of the money he made home to his family in Florence to support his father and brothers) for his life of artistic toil and creative genius. The full-page paintings and small inserts feature crisp lines and a subdued palette (brown, black, gray) with touches of purple and red to emphasize hats and clothing, and white highlights that contrast starkly with darker textiles and mosaics. Images of Michelangelo's art are photo-based and computer manipulated, and they're seamlessly integrated into the compositions. Stanley spends little space on speculation, preferring what she can know to what she can imagine; still, she manages to provide an in-depth picture of Michelangelo that reflects a complex, quixotic, difficult personality without sacrificing pathos or sympathy. JMD

STEIG, WILLIAM *Wizzil*; illus. by Quentin Blake. Farrar, 2000 32p

ISBN 0-374-38466-5 \$16.00

Ad 6-9 yrs

A bored Wizzil the witch is out to "make somebody suffer" when she disguises herself as a housefly and "zizzed on over to Frimp Farm to check it out incognito."

DeWitt Frimp, ace flyswatter, nearly puts an end to the wicked witch ("that bald-headed fuddy-dud with his crazy swatter darn near did me in!"), but Wizzil zooms to freedom while plotting revenge. Her vengeance (and Wizzil herself) takes the form of a left-handed work glove for DeWitt that is loaded with bad luck. After a series of unexplained catastrophes that affect the whole Frimp family, DeWitt wises up to the glove's penchant for mischief and reluctantly throws it in the river: "Wizzle the glove began squirming and stretching, and, right there in the water, began turning into the hateful hag she had always been." DeWitt jumps in to save her and finds that instead of a witch he has saved a sweet old lady: "Wizzil had been so thoroughly cleansed by the crystal-clear water that all her vicious nastiness was whirled away downstream." Steig's story contains folkloric elements without the logic of traditional structure. The opening, conclusion, and main body of the story are three distinct, disparate parts that never come together as a whole. Still, Steig's humor is pretty irresistible, and listeners will probably be able to suspend their disbelief long enough to get to the rescue scene. Blake's line and watercolor illustrations have more than his usual energy here, the scribbly lines and broken curves giving the compositions a sense of kinetic motion. That aw, shucks light in DeWitt's eye as he gazes at the redeemed Wizzil is pretty cute; maybe youngsters will appreciate the notions that it's never too late to change and it's never too late for love. JMD

STRASSER, TODD *Give a Boy a Gun*. Simon, 2000 146p  
ISBN 0-689-81112-8 \$16.00

Ad Gr. 7-12

One protagonist's stepsister collects quotes from participants, transcripts of chatroom chat, and other entries to tell the story of two students' revenge: heavily armed, they take their classmates hostage at a dance, planning to kill them all. Echoes of recent infamous school shootings are clear and deliberate: Gary and Brendan are unsuited to the school's sports-centered scheme of popularity, scorned by jocks, and disenfranchised by school administration. Their elaborate plan of revenge founders when Gary's girlfriend turns up unexpectedly at the dance and Gary's resolve crumbles in the face of concrete reality, but the result is merely a different kind of tragedy from the one they'd intended. Strasser gives voice to multiple opinions but definitely sides with particular viewpoints: this is essentially a call-from-arms, with footnotes quoting figures and statements (unfortunately poorly cited) about the impact of firearms on U.S. society; there's also a sure-to-be controversial implication that the situation that made the boys so angry bears culpability perhaps even greater than the action itself. The moral advocacy is at times ham-fisted, and the characters' comments are very conveniently shaped, but this is much more engaging and emotional than the similarly multivocal *Making Up Megaboy* (BCCB 5/98). Teens will take passionate sides in reading this one; use that to start a discussion, or pair this title with Myers' *Monster* (BCCB 5/99) for an examination of the morality of crime and punishment. DS

TOMPERT, ANN *Saint Nicholas*; illus. by Michael Garland. Boyds Mills, 2000 [32p]

ISBN 1-56397-844-X \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

Relegating the Santa connection to introductory and concluding notes, Tompert recounts what has come to be known about the popular saint from "legends that have come down through the ages." The best-known stories of his gift of three

dowries, rescue of a ship at sea, and resurrection of three dead school boys are told with simple reverence rather than breathless embellishment, and they're therefore smoothly woven into the context of a mundane (and therefore quite credible) priestly life of good works. Garland's mixed-media illustrations, which simulate tiny chips of tile for text borders and full spreads, must be viewed up close to catch the mosaic effect; a group audience is more likely to miss the fine-line detail and notice instead soft contours, doe-eyed figures, and a flower-petal palette. Although less successful visually than Robert Sabuda's *Saint Valentine*, this title shares its spirit and approach, and like Valentine, merits attention on more than a single feast day per year. EB

URBAN, BETSY *Waiting for Deliverance*. Orchard, 2000 [192p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-531-33310-8 \$18.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30310-1 \$17.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-9

Livy and cousin Eph suddenly become charity cases after the drowning death of their family, and it is with equal reluctance and relief that the authorities accept the low bid for their upkeep from mysterious frontiersman Gideon Gunn, who signs his "X" and leads the children off into the woods. On the outskirts of late eighteenth-century civilization the children find they've been relatively fortunate; Gunn and his pretty young wife are decent, kindly farmers who work their charges hard but fairly. However, Gunn's status as a Seneca adoptee draws his entire household into a complex web of relationships with his Seneca village and white settlers; as direct consequences, Gunn is betrayed by Eph and mauled by a vengeful logger, the homestead is burned, and Livy finds romance with Gunn's brother, Rising Hawk. Urban illuminates the legacy of suspicion and revenge left by the Revolutionary War and handily captures the patterns of frontier and Indian village life through richly developed episodes. Livy's incipient love affair with Rising Hawk is the stuff of another genre, though, as the pair spins anachronistic conversations around whether they should have sex (Livy is justifiably terrified of dying in childbirth). Her cinematic rush to Rising Hawk's arms at the novel's close may provide the hoped-for ending, but it leaves the reader suspecting that all the carefully crafted historical fiction is merely in service of a B romance. EB

VISCONTI, GUIDO *The Genius of Leonardo*; tr. by Mark Roberts; illus. by Bimba Landmann. Barefoot, 2000 [40p]

ISBN 1-84148-301-X \$16.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 2-5

Visconti and Landmann, author and illustrator of *A Boy Named Giotto* (BCCB 1/00), here turn their attention to the great genius from Vinci. Using excerpts from Leonardo's own journals, according to jacket copy, the book focuses on his young apprentice, Giacomo, and his experience with Leonardo. Visconti describes Leonardo's labors on *The Last Supper* and the *Mona Lisa* as well as his participation in the war effort when the French attacked Milan, but the emphasis is really on Leonardo's visionary brilliance and limitless curiosity. There's a quiet (occasionally hagiographic) reverence to the treatment that the book does a good job of justifying; it's clear that Giacomo's master is deserving of his celebrity. However, the progression seems rather aimless (and the text stodgily crammed into its space), with some segues abrupt and disconcerting; the book also rearranges history to suit

its narrative, with nearly thirty years compressed into young Giacomo's tenure, the *Mona Lisa* (here a painting of the woman of the same name) painted before *The Last Supper*, and Leonardo's move to France seemingly happening in the midst of Leonardo's participation in the fight *against* France. Landmann's art has a serene elegance; faces echo the Italian modernism of Modigliani and Brancusi, while the rich earth pigments that dominate the spreads lend an appropriately Renaissance flavor. Opening and closing spreads offer brief sequences illustrated with facsimiles of Leonardo's notebooks; they provide a succinct and inviting summary in their own right. For biographies, you're better off with Diane Stanley's *Leonardo da Vinci* (BCCB 9/96), but this is an imaginative evocation of one of history's great minds. DS

WALLNER, ALEXANDRA *Sergio and the Hurricane*; written and illus. by Alexandra Wallner. Holt, 2000 26p  
ISBN 0-8050-6203-3 \$16.00 Ad 4-8 yrs

This child's-eye view of a tropical hurricane is set in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Sergio "was too young to remember the last big hurricane . . . so he was excited," in contrast to the adults, who point out that "a hurricane is a very serious thing." The story moves at a measured pace, providing a manageable level of detail to depict the family's preparations for the storm (including their shopping list), the dark and stormy night itself (including the crackling sounds of the radio, urging people to stay indoors), and the sobering aftermath of the one hundred seventy mile-per-hour winds, which toppled ancient trees and sandblasted the paint off Sergio's house, creating a lot of work for those—including young Sergio—who help clean up. The muted brights of the gouache illustrations also make their point about the hurricane's power without overwhelming the viewer, but the stolid demeanor of the human figures is static, and it offers little contrast to the stylized ocean and sky. A note at the end provides a fairly abstract explanation and a few facts about hurricanes, but no indication that this book is based on any particular historic event. Still, this remains an accessible and well-pitched look at how people respond to natural disasters.. FK

WARE, CHERYL *Venola in Love*; illus. by Kristin Sorra. Orchard, 2000 [160p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-531-33306-X \$16.99  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-30306-3 \$15.95  
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 5-8

Seventh-grader Venola Mae Cutright begins the second-half of her seventh-grade year by recording the events of her life in a \$15.99 (plus tax) diary she purchased in lieu of a new pair of jeans. The diary pages, at times alternating with copies of emails (written to her most-of-the-time best friend Sally, a teacher, and the advice column for Young and Stylish magazine), reveal the sometimes funny and sometimes excruciating rites of passage for Venola. Worried at first she will have nothing to write about, her fears are soon allayed with the arrival of handsome new boy Nathan at school, the announcement that her mother is going to have another baby, and peer pressure from acquaintances with sticky fingers. Though unrequited, her enthusiasm for Nathan remains strong, while she struggles to make choices she can live with when some friends begin shoplifting ("No, tell them I won't tell. But I'm not going in the drugstore (or any stores) with them again"), and she (one of two girls in the Cutright clan) researches baby names for her sixth

sibling ("I'M NOT EVEN GOING TO LOOK FOR A BABY BROTHER'S NAME. IF IT'S A BOY, MAYBE MAMA CAN TRADE WITH SOMEONE AT THE HOSPITAL . . . OR SEND IT BACK TO BE EXCHANGED"). Unfortunately, the writing is sometimes clumsy, and Venola's voice is too self-consciously aware. Ware nonetheless manages to reveal the life of a seventh grader, including some steps toward growth, while remaining reasonably realistic. Fans who enjoyed meeting Venola Mae in *Catty-Cornered* will not be disappointed. EAB

WELCH, SHEILA KELLY *The Shadowed Unicorn*. Front Street/Cricket, 2000 185p  
ISBN 0-8126-2895-0 \$15.95 Ad Gr. 4-8

After a freak bicycling accident kills their father, Brendan, Nick, and Ami leave New York City with their mother to live rent-free in an inherited family home in the Pennsylvania countryside. While twelve-year-old twins Brendan and Nick have each other to work through their grief, fourteen-year-old Ami turns to her fantasy world of unicorns. Ami doesn't stop with simply collecting and writing about unicorns but insists on combing the forest as Maid Amelia, building lures to capture one: "It is necessary that we gather the proper rocks. They should be approximately this big. . . . And the color must be as dark as possible." Brendan, searching for his own footing, finds himself drawn into Ami's fantasy, at first participating as if it was one of their father's imaginative adventures, but then finding himself eager to catch a glimpse of a unicorn, as well. Ami's adventure leads them to Old Man Johansson's house, where she is certain they will find the black unicorn. Welch's writing is rich with detail, including Ami's trancelike obsession with capturing a unicorn to deal with her father's death ("I think it's got to be real, because if it's real, then I can believe in other things") and Brendan's search for identity ("It was as if he himself had changed during the night"). However, Ami's trancelike behavior and Brendan's only partially sympathetic point-of-view distance the reader from the heart of the story, which is Ami's guilt over what were to be her last words to her father: "I hate you!" For a more empathetic look at the grieving process after the loss of a family member, try Suzanne Freeman's *The Cuckoo's Child* (BCCB 3/96) or Couloumbis's *Getting Near to Baby* (11/98). EAB

WILLIAMS, CAROL LYNCH *Carolina Autumn*. Delacorte, 2000 [128p]  
ISBN 0-385-32716-1 \$14.95  
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 6-9

Fourteen-year-old Carolina has been barely hanging on since the death of her father and older sister, Madelaine, in a plane crash; she and her mother have been polite but distant, masking grief and anger as well as they can. Carolina's friends have been her source of strength, but now that ninth grade is starting it looks like there's a heartbreaking complication there as well: her flirtatious friend, Mara, has apparently set her sight on Carolina's boyfriend, Garret. Williams plausibly paints Carolina's despondent fatalism about her relationship with Garret; because of her overwhelming losses, she makes the loss of Garret all the likelier by treating it as inevitable. Unfortunately, the playing out of this plot thread turns more to convenience than believability in Garret's quick and easy final choice of Carolina over Mara. Though the retrospective depiction of the two sisters forming a secure connection to anchor them in their troubled family is compelling, there are prob-



lems with that plot as well: the revelation of the family problems (the girls' parents were getting divorced and their mother had relinquished Madelaine) is somewhat predictable and the interpolated notes to Madelaine are more disruptive than plot-enhancing. Williams still writes evocatively of the disorientation and suffering of bereavement, however, and this is likely to attract fans of her earlier treatments of the subject (*Kelly and Me*, BCCB 3/94, *Christmas in Heaven*, 5/00, etc.). DS

WILLIAMS, LAURA ELLEN *ABC Kids*; written and illustrated with photographs by Laura Ellen Williams. Philomel, 2000 32p  
ISBN 0-399-23370-9 \$15.99 R 1-4 yrs

What this alpha-photo book has going for it is a jazzy layout, saturated Crayola colors, and photographic images of a bunch of bright, shiny kid faces. "A apple" (capital letter "A," "apple" in lower case letters) features the top of a dark-haired girl's face, from nose on up, peering upward toward the shiny red apple balanced precariously on her head; the utensil in "S spoon" is hanging from a smiling toddler's nose. Each letter gets its own page and its own enthusiastic kid(s) happily participating in the moment (the little girl in "D dirt" is obviously gleeful about the muddy state of self and clothing). The children are a variety of races, ages, and demeanors, but their smiling faces are the faces of children everywhere. Williams' images have an unposed air, and they capture a fleeting, seemingly spontaneous moment and freeze it in photographic time. The glossy pages give the pictures extra dash, and the simplicity of the text works in the book's favor. Adults will take to this title because it provides so many teachable moments, but babies will take to it because of all the cheerful children's faces with features they can recognize, point to, and imitate. Make room on the alphabet book shelf for this classy concept book. JMD

WILLIS, JEANNE *Susan Laughs*; illus. by Tony Ross. Holt, 2000 28p  
ISBN 0-8050-6501-6 \$15.00 M 4-7 yrs

Susan, a carrot-topped moppet, exhibits a wide range of moods ("Susan's shy, Susan's loud, Susan's angry, Susan's proud"), each one illustrated by an energetic pencil and crayon picture. The text is a singsong collection of not always related actions and emotions leading up to the final illustration of the redheaded protagonist in a wheelchair: "That is Susan, through and through—just like me, just like you." Astute viewers may note that Susan is never standing or walking on her own in the previous illustrations; still, that final revelation is a surprise. While this surprise is intentional, it robs the story of spontaneity and turns it into a well-meaning litany deliberately designed to set up the viewer for the hammer-headed message. Ross' illustrations focus on the perky protagonist, showing Susan engaged in a wide variety of kid-pleasing activities, her red head of hair acting as the focal point for the simple compositions. Both text and pictures deliberately encourage readers to see Susan as a child like themselves before revealing her physical limitations, but Susan's disability is not just underplayed, it is purposely hidden. There is no indication of wheelchair, crutches, or any other assistive devices that would be a normal part of this child's everyday world, an artistic choice that suggests such devices keep a child from being "just like you" and unfortunately undermines the book's usefulness as an educational tool. JMD

WISHINSKY, FRIEDA *Nothing Scares Us*; illus. by Neal Layton. Carolrhoda, 2000 [26p]

ISBN 1-57505-490-6 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

Fearless best friends Lucy and Lenny conquer imaginary monsters, fight imaginary aliens, and otherwise do everything together, until Lenny's new favorite TV show, the CREATURE, comes between them. Despite her fears, Lucy goes over to Lenny's house to watch the CREATURE, because she is more afraid of Lenny's disdain than the TV monster. In a climactic (and cleverly rendered) spread, readers are lead to believe that the CREATURE has emerged from the TV screen and captured Lenny, until a turn of the page reveals that Lenny has jumped up onto the couch, terrified of a spider crawling on the popcorn bowl. Lucy quickly rescues Lenny by throwing the spider out the window. When Lenny admires her courage, Lucy admits that she is afraid of scary TV shows, and the two friends return to exploits that they both enjoy, conquering monsters as the "Fearless Two." Layton uses the scribbled look of childhood drawings for the expressive figures of Lucy and Lenny, setting their tastefully vibrant colors (Lucy's in an eye-popping purple and red top) against equally tasteful and intense backgrounds. The message that everyone is afraid of something is direct but not didactic, and storytime participants will chant "We are the Fearless Two! Nothing and no one scares us!" all the way home. KM

WISLER, G. CLIFTON *Run the Blockade*. HarperCollins, 2000 [128p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029208-3 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-16538-9 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-7

Henry Severn's older cousin Robert proves an invaluable friend to the family after the drowning death of Henry's seafaring father. First, he secures positions for his aunt and cousins in the household and business of his own employers, Liverpool merchants, and later he arranges for Henry to accompany him as cabin boy on what promises to be a lucrative venture smuggling cargo through the Union blockade of Confederate ports. Henry's first tour at sea nets him wealth beyond the wildest dreams of a formerly impoverished Irish boy with limited education, but it also lands him in a New York prison, faced with the choice of rotting in a filthy, overcrowded cell or signing on with the Union Navy. Wisler loosely bases his tale on the memoirs of Thomas Taylor (on whom the character Robert is modeled), crew on the actual steamer *Banshee*, but shifts the focus here to fictional teen narrator Henry. Henry pays relatively scant attention to reader-pleasing details of shipboard life, and has even less to say about his time in prison. Moreover, potential subplots involving his family back home and his recurrent encounters with the nosy niece of the U.S. Consul in Nassau lead up blind alleys. Still, Henry's exploits illuminate a shadowy corner of the Civil War—the fortunes made from supporting cotton/textile trade between Britain and the South—and demonstrate the mortal risks and moral compromises inherent in wartime profiteering. EB

ANNOUNCEMENT: Penguin Putnam informs us that Carol Diggory Shields' new book, reviewed in the September *Bulletin* as *Lucky Pennies and Hot Chocolate with Grandpa*, will actually be titled *Lucky Pennies and Hot Chocolate*.

## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

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*Children's Literature* 28. Ed. Elizabeth Lennox Keyser and Julie Pfeiffer. Yale, 2000. Library ed. ISBN 0-300-08234-7; \$40.00. Paper ed. ISBN 0-300-08235-5; \$18.00. 291p.

This year's annual offers a particularly interesting debate on the nature of the genre of children's literature, headed by Perry Nodelman's "Pleasure and Genre: Speculations on the Characteristics of Children's Fiction" with responses from Roderick McGillis, Thomas Travisano, and Margaret Higonnet and rejoinder from Nodelman. Also noteworthy is a collection of memorial pieces in honor of the late Francelia Butler, plus the usual suspects of book reviews and "varia." DS

Volz, Bridget Dealy. *Junior Genreflecting: A Guide to Good Reads and Series Fiction for Children*; by Bridget Dealy Volz, Cheryl Perkins Scheer, and Lynda Blackburn Welborn. Libraries Unlimited, 2000. ISBN 1-56308-556-9; \$28.00. 187p.

Those familiar with the *Genreflecting* and *Teen Genreflecting* titles will probably have seen this one coming and welcomed its approach: the authors have focused on books for third through eighth graders, dividing them into six genres (adventure, animal stories, contemporary life stories, fantasy and science fiction, historical fiction, and mysteries) and offering subdivisions within those. Selected titles were all published in the last ten years; recommendation in a review periodical or appearance on a Notables or Best Books for Young Adults list was a prerequisite for inclusion. The annotations are concise, and in addition to publication information, awards and sequels are included where appropriate; there's also a special designation for picture books suitable for older readers and for titles especially suitable for readers in grades 6-8 (no grade levels are otherwise suggested). Genre specialists (and specialist texts) will be able to go well beyond the representatives here, of course (and the approach limits some genres, such as science fiction), but this will help many professionals fill in the blanks on less-known areas. The inclusion of paperback series is particularly useful, and readers will doubtless find the authors' picks for their favorites in each genre provocative. Subject and author/title indices are included. DS



## SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

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Keyed to *The Bulletin's* alphabetical arrangement by author, this index, which appears in each issue, can be used in three ways. Entries in regular type refer to subjects; entries in **bold type** refer to curricular or other uses; entries in ALL-CAPS refer to genres and appeals. In the case of subject headings, the subhead "stories" refers to books for the readaloud audience; "fiction," to those books intended for independent reading.

- Abuse-fiction: Alphin; Dessen
- Actors and acting-fiction:
  - Blackwood; Cheaney
- ADVENTURE STORIES:
  - Armstrong
- African Americans: Clinton; Nobisso
- African Americans-fiction: Belton
- African Americans-stories: Miller
- Alaska-fiction: Hill
- ALPHABET BOOKS: Sierra; Williams, L.
- American Indians-fiction: Durrant; Urban
- Animals-stories: Brett; Bunting; Sierra
- Architecture: Greenberg
- Art and artists: Greenberg; Stanley; Visconti
- Aunts-fiction: Belton; Bonners; Montes
- Babies: McCarty
- Baths-stories: McNeil
- BEDTIME STORIES: Lewis; McNeil
- BIBLE STORIES: Maccarone
- BIOGRAPHIES: Greenberg; Ketchum; Stanley; Visconti
- Birds-stories: Martin
- Boxing-fiction: Cadnum
- Brothers and sisters-fiction:
  - Durrant; Joseph; Konigsburg; Ware; Welch
- Brothers and sisters-stories: Lasky
- Brothers-fiction: Montes
- Brothers-stories: Martin
- Canada: Galloway
- Carnivals-fiction: Paulsen
- Cats-stories: Collington
- Christmas:** Bunting; Carle; Maccarone; Tompert
- Christmas-fiction: Antle; Avi
- Circuses-fiction: Lawrence; Price
- Civil War-fiction: Wisler
- Clothing-stories: Lasky
- CONCEPT BOOKS: Fleming
- Crime and criminals-fiction:
  - Alphin; Antle; Cadnum; Cheaney; Dessen; Hite; Konigsburg; Strasser; Wisler
- Dating-fiction: Dexter
- Death and dying-fiction: Anderson; Williams, C.
- Disabilities-stories: Willis
- Disasters-stories: Wallner
- Disease-fiction: Anderson
- Dogs-stories: Laden
- Dominican Republic-fiction: Joseph
- Driving-fiction: Dexter
- Education: Cruz
- Elephants-fiction: Price
- Ethics and values:** Belton; Durrant; Ferris; Kerner; Strasser
- Explorers and exploring: Armstrong
- Families-fiction: Dessen; Joseph; Konigsburg; Masterman-Smith; McNichols
- FANTASY: Napoli
- Farms-stories: Steig
- Fathers and daughters-fiction:
  - Belton; Masterman-Smith
- Fear-stories: Wishinsky
- FOLKTALES AND FAIRYTALES:
  - Alvarez; Grindley; Kimmel;

Martin; Napoli; Oberman; San Souci  
 Friendship-fiction: Ferris; Greene; Konigsburg; Mills; Price  
 Friendship-stories: Wishinsky  
**FUNNY STORIES:** Collington; Palatini; Steig  
 Gambling-fiction: Masterman-Smith  
**Geography:** Lourie  
**GHOST STORIES:** Montes  
 Grandfathers-fiction: Anderson  
 Grandmothers-fiction: Fleischman; Haas  
 Grandmothers-stories: Schaefer  
 Guns-fiction: Strasser  
 Hair-stories: Palatini  
 Halloween-stories: San Souci; Schaefer  
**HISTORICAL FICTION:** Anderson; Belton; Blackwood; Cheaney; Durrant; Fagan; Giff; Hesse; Hill; Hite; Lyons; McNichols; Miller; Urban; Wisler  
**History, U.S.:** Clinton; Freedman; Lourie; Nobisso; Urban  
**History, world:** Dash; Galloway; Stanley; Visconti  
 Homosexuality-fiction: Ferris  
 Horses-fiction: Haas  
 Hurricanes-stories: Wallner  
 Inventors and inventing: Dash  
 Ireland-fiction: Giff  
 Kidnapping-fiction: Alphin; Hite  
 Latinos-stories: Wallner  
 Money-fiction: Greene  
 Monsters-fiction: Lattimore  
 Mothers and daughters-fiction: Dexter; Kerner; Williams, C.  
 Music and musicians-stories: Miller  
**MYSTERIES:** Alphin; Avi  
**MYTHS:** Lattimore  
 Orphans-fiction: Montes; Urban  
 Pirates-stories: McNeil  
**POETRY:** Hopkins; Nye; Prelutsky  
 Politics-fiction: Bonners  
 Prejudice-fiction: Belton; Lawrence  
 Puerto Rico-stories: Wallner  
 Queens-stories: Lewis  
 Racism: Clinton

**Reading aloud:** Greene; Hopkins; Lattimore; Nye; Prelutsky  
**Reading, beginning:** Antle  
**Reading, easy:** Antle; Greene  
**Religious education:** Kimmel; Oberman  
**RHYMING STORIES:** Bunting; Lewis; Sierra  
 Rivers: Lourie  
 Romance-fiction: Paulsen  
**Rosh Hashanah:** Kimmel  
 Runaways-fiction: Paulsen  
 Russia-folklore: Martin  
 Saints-stories: Tompert  
 School-fiction: Howe; Mills; Ware  
 School-stories: Palatini; Sierra  
 Schools: Cruz  
**SCIENCE FICTION:** Kerner  
 Sisters-fiction: Dessen; Williams, C.  
 Skeletons-stories: San Souci  
 Slavery-fiction: Lyons  
 Snow-stories: Carle; Lasky; Schaefer  
**SPORTS STORIES:** Cadnum  
**Storytelling:** Lattimore; Martin  
**Storytime:** Grindley; Lewis; McNeil; Sierra; Sís; Wishinsky  
 Teachers-fiction: Hill  
 Teeth-stories: Sís  
 Theater-fiction: Blackwood; Cheaney  
 Trains: Nobisso  
 Transportation-poetry: Nye  
 United States-poetry: Hopkins  
 Urban life-stories: Sís  
 Voyages and travel: Armstrong; Dash; Lourie  
 Voyages and travel-fiction: Hesse; Hite; Wisler  
 Voyages and travel-poetry: Nye  
 Weather-stories: Fleischman; Lasky  
 Weddings-fiction: Fagan  
 West, the: Ketchum  
 West, the-fiction: Antle; Hite  
 Witches-stories: Steig  
**Women's studies:** Ketchum  
 Work-fiction: Greene  
 World cultures-stories: Sís  
 World War II: Galloway  
 Writers and writing-fiction: Howe; Joseph

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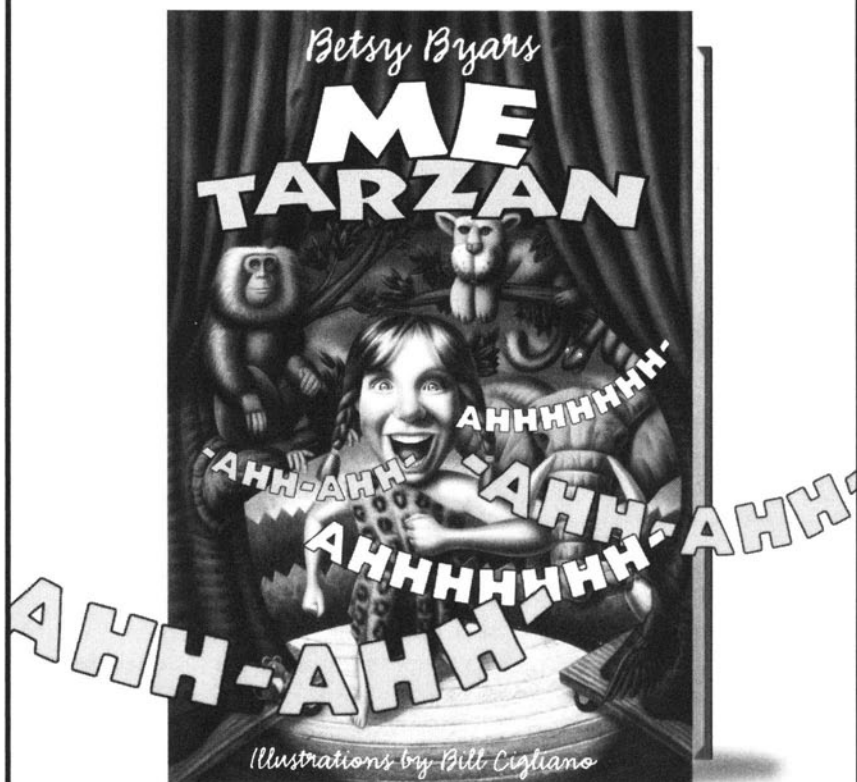
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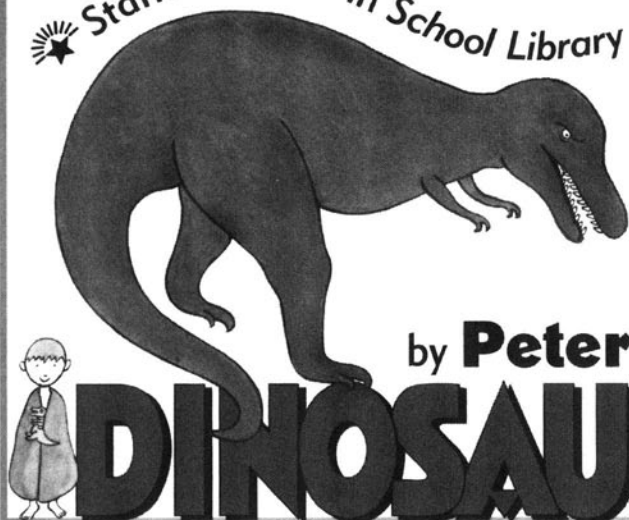
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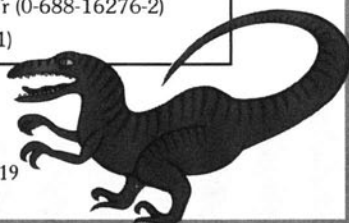
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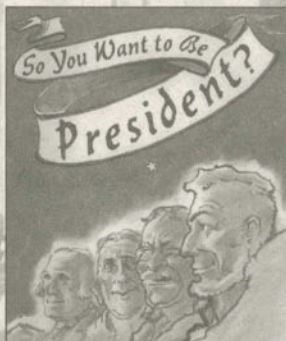
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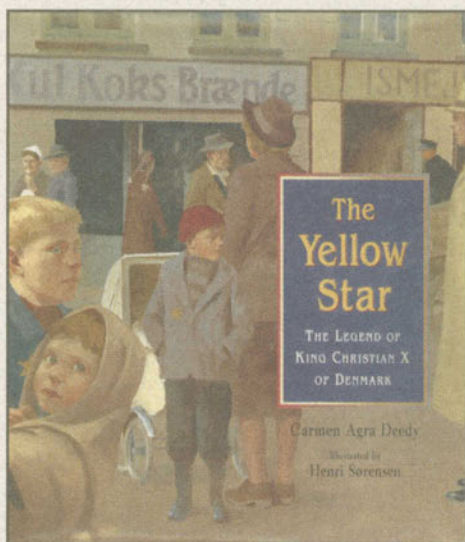
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